

PrideTO BQTE: EP06: Samantha Bitty

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SPEAKERS

Hollywood Jade, Samantha Bitty

Hollywood Jade 00:00

You're listening to Pride Toronto's Black Queer and Trans Excellence podcast, where we honour and celebrate the Black experience through the lens of the LGBTQ+ community with honest conversations about embracing Black joy. I'm your host, Hollywood Jade.

Hollywood Jade 00:28

Coucou and bonsoir and welcome back to Black Queer Trans excellence! As stated, I am your host, Hollywood Jade. My pronouns are he/him, and sometimes cis. My guest today is a rather spectacular woman, who goes by the name of Samantha Bitty. She is a sexual health/ consent educator, speaker, quintuple fire-sign (I love that), and social change entrepreneur. With humour, empathy and liberation as, at the center of her work, she uses games, drag and media to push the boundaries of propriety and facilitate entry points into challenging conversations. Samantha prioritizes art, aesthetics and accessibility to teach Sex Ed that is rooted in pleasure, anti-racism, disability, justice, and is affirming to folks across the gender sexuality spectrum, and is a survivor of GBV. Please, ladies, gentlemen, and those who have yet to decide, welcome Samantha to the conversation!

Samantha Bitty 01:42

Hi!

Hollywood Jade 01:43

How are you?

Samantha Bitty 01:44

I'm doing well. It's, it's funny to hear a bio of yourself, I'm like: "Do I do that shit? Like, am I am, I am doing that? Okay, good. Yes, good, good."

Hollywood Jade 01:55

I am of the same mind. Like it's really crazy to me, whenever I have to sit and listen to somebody read a bio to me. I'm just like, "Did I do that? Ow. Oh, come on."

Samantha Bitty 02:05

And I have to update my bio, because I have a show coming out like really soon, a web show, and it's like, aaand host of this show as well. So that's, you know, that's what's up.

Hollywood Jade 02:19

I love meeting other multi-hyphenate artists (Samantha laughs) and activists and members of the community because I think so often we get pigeonholed into one space, and one way of being and I love meeting other people who are just like, you're not going to tell me that I can't, you're not going to say that I won't, and here it is. (He chuckles)

Samantha Bitty 02:41

Yes. And like, I just want to acknowledge that we're on Zoom, and I can see you and like so much of the conversation already, I'm like nodding I'm like, "Yeah," but it's like, people listening can't see that or know what, but it's so, and I think that's the huge barrier, often with writing a bio when you are multi-talented or multi-interested or multi-disciplinary, because people, people's brains can't necessarily compute that. And when we're meeting people, like not just even in a work context, or like a creative project context, like if I were to meet you, and it's like, people always want to be like, oh, what do you do?

Hollywood Jade 03:19

Yes.

Samantha Bitty 03:19

I'm like, uummmm okay. I can give you some words. But like, is that capturing or encapsulating what it is that...

Hollywood Jade 03:28

I do? Or who I am?!

Samantha Bitty 03:30

Or like, yeah, so I typically try to like ask people like, back in the past, when we, when we met people, like when you were able to, when we were when we did that - interacted, in person (Hollywood Jade laughs) I would all I would try to be like, like, if I was in a space sharing air with you, like I would, I always tried to ask people like, what do you like to do?

Hollywood Jade 03:53

Nice!

Samantha Bitty 03:53

Because I think that's so much more indicative of like, who that person is like. 'Cause I feel really fortunate. And it sounds like you do too, to like, do work that I love, that I identify with, that represents me, at my soul yet not everybody has that opportunity at every moment, and that hasn't always been true for me. So it's like, what I like to do, though, has so much more to do with who I am and I think other people feel that way, too.

Hollywood Jade 04:18

I'm so geeked about this conversation with you. (Samantha laughs!) Just because like even listening to you just say that. It's like I rather ask people what they like to do than what they do do. As an entertainer, it's so off putting

to me when I meet people for the first time, and they're like, so what do you do? Because there's their stigma. If I say, I, when I was just a dancer, I'd be like, I'm, I dance and their immediate thought was that I was a stripper. Right. Okay. And I'm like, Yes, Not that there's anything wrong with that because honey, get, get your coin, but I'm like, that's not what I do. So I love that approach of what are you interested in? What, what do you like to do? Ooh, that's good.

Samantha Bitty 05:02

I think there's so much I think it's so much more. Like it's a, it's a practice I've had for many, many years because they're like I said for a long time, what I did is my day to day pay my bills type work, wasn't, didn't, wasn't something I identified with per se. And I felt there was so much erasure of me happening once someone would meet me 'cause like, what you said is like, people want, people ask that question, because often it's not 'cause they want to relate to you, it's because they want to compartmentalize you, they want to hierarchize you, especially in a city like Toronto, people want to know, okay, like, where do you reside?

Hollywood Jade 05:37

Right.

Samantha Bitty 05:38

And so what you like to do, I think, is even more relevant now, where so many people's work has been displaced.

Hollywood Jade 05:46

Ooh!

Samantha Bitty 05:46

And it's like, they're no longer - and it's uncomfortable, and especially me, someone who's like out here dating, and it's like that entry point into talking, I don't want to ask someone like what you do, because like, for all I know, you, you have been displaced and that's point of discomfort or shame, or whatever it was, like, I'm trying to keep you wet, I'm trying to keep you hard, I can't go.

Hollywood Jade 06:08

Let's go! (both laughing)

Samantha Bitty 06:09

Yeah, I don't want to bring up some shit that you're upset about, oh,

Hollywood Jade 06:13

That's gonna ruin the whole mood.

Samantha Bitty 06:15

Yeah, like, let's say, what were you like, I don't know, what you did or do, or whatever, you know, so I think it's important.

Hollywood Jade 06:22

I love that. And I want to get into what it is that you do - like that bio, even reading it and putting my notes together today, I was just like, this is either, you're going to be one of two things: you're either going to be the coolest most down to earth, most realist, or you're going to be like super scholar very, like "the statistics in da-da-da". And both are accepted here, because there's no discrimination. But my type of personality mesh so much better with the "this is just the stuff that I like to do, and I'm making it happen."

Samantha Bitty 06:56

I'm making it happen. Yeah. And I -

Hollywood Jade 06:58

Let's give the audience at some, some perspective about what it is that you do, like you can give us a, if you can give us, a quick synopsis,

Samantha Bitty 07:08

Oof, I mean, and I hear that. And I think too, that's one of the things with bios, where it's like, okay, who is this person on paper? Who is this person actually. And, you know, there was there, there was a long period where I felt like I had to use certain words or replicate certain structures to do my work, because there is that academized version, there is that scholarly version, there are these ways of imagining sexual health consent, anti-sexual violence, gender-based violence, rayrayray, right?! And I tried that wasn't a good fit, it was like very much against who I am as a person and as an artist, right?! And then when I The more I started doing it the way that made sense to me, which is the things that we talked about prioritizing our aesthetics, humour, saying the wrong thing, the more - not only like outwardly successful was I in terms of reaching more audiences, but like inwardly fulfilled and inwardly at home. And like, there is a lot of pressure to like, what's it - conform to a certain way of being and I know that -

Hollywood Jade 08:16

Especially people of color

Samantha Bitty 08:17

- and "the concepts of professionalism," and brought whatever asterisk - sk sk - (both laughing) the way that, the way that we're perceived in spaces, there is almost this pressure to overcompensate, because the ways that we move are interpreted through a certain lens and certain lenses.

Hollywood Jade 08:40

Completely.

Samantha Bitty 08:41

And there's a reason why I'm an independent educator and an entrepreneur, and it's not just because I like to not between 2 and 5, it's like (both laughing), I don't fit in those spaces, hon, you know?! And, and (both laughing)

Hollywood Jade 08:56

I'm, I am of the same mind as you like, it's like I couldn't,.. I was talking to a friend today, and I literally was just like, could you imagine me working at a bank, like you came in the bank to do a transaction, (Samantha laughing) and I'm just behind the counter. And the way that my friend laughed, I'm like "Exactly!" So I know that I'm doing exactly what I'm supposed to be doing and the WAY that I'm doing it, you know?!

Samantha Bitty 09:21

Although I will say, I would love that bank.

Hollywood Jade 09:25

It would be so fetch.

Samantha Bitty 09:27

Yeah. (both laughing) I was like, that's the experience I want to have when I'm taking out money to pay a landlord, you know?! (Samantha laughing)

Hollywood Jade 09:35

So how would you, I, I tried to summarize, in my ignorance, what, how we could describe what you do. So would social change entrepreneur be a fair way if we had to give you a title? Would that be a fair way of saying that?

Samantha Bitty 09:56

I think it's the most concise way of saying that because what I do spans across sex and consent and gender-based violence and anti-O and anti-racism and I also do public art, like I manage public art projects and stuff, and it's like, what, what's ..The common theme in all my work is always like changing the ways communities, especially once were under-resourced, access resources, art, education. And like not just like the like, not just like the material thing, but like the way they access it.

Hollywood Jade 10:32

Ooh.

Samantha Bitty 10:32

And that is like the, that I think is like the, the bubble that all that I do resides within. And like, so for the present moment, while I'm like, you know, so fine ass, I talk a lot about sex and consent with, with young people and young adults and adults, right?! But that I'm open to that changing.

Hollywood Jade 10:54

I love that.

Samantha Bitty 10:54

If it, if it's not like the right fit, but like, yeah, I guess like,

Hollywood Jade 10:57

I think your timing.. it like, we're like you said in this present moment, I think your timing of approaching this subject matter with these demographics is so spot on. It's so spot on, because this is the area, I think, where we can affect the most change to, to make the world that we want to live in a better place.

11:18

That so.. I got chills when he said that because my favourite group, like age group, like I like working with people, I assume you're around the same age as me, like, I like working with people our age, so I can say some wild shit, you know what I mean?! Like, I can say a lot of things and it's, it's okay, like, there isn't the same kind of like, self-regulation around how I talk about certain things.

Hollywood Jade 11:41

Correct.

Samantha Bitty 11:42

Yeah, that said, when I work with youth, who are like 13, 14, up to like people who are 20, or like, if I'm working with the university, as much as I can say wild shit, I also still have to be aware that that is an institution, and if I want them to have me back, and I don't want to be effective, I've got to keep it a little bit

Hollywood Jade 12:00

Streamlined.

Samantha Bitty 12:01

A little bit.

Hollywood Jade 12:03

A little bit. (laughing)

Samantha Bitty 12:05

So I mean, they hire me, because I say things like "cummed in." Like they're like, "okay, like, she can say that, we can't say that?!" But she could say that, so it's okay. Yes, it's disruptive. But when I work with that younger age group, it's so inspiring because things that our generation and the generations before us fought for, you know, around visibility and safety, around gender, sexuality, whatever, that we've, we've been fighting to normalize, it's normal for them.

Hollywood Jade 12:32

Yes.

Samantha Bitty 12:33

When you hear it, when you see it, when you actually witness it, it's like, oh. Also, I will say that girls who are like 15 years old are still having, I'm still having at 35 the same issues, the same relationship issues that they're having, so I'm like, "Okay, so in 20 years, I haven't grown or like, .."

Hollywood Jade 12:52

Or society hasn't grown.

Samantha Bitty 12:54

Or society hasn't grown, we're still dealing with the remnants of misogyny and patriarchy as it relates to our relationships, or whatever. But I'll give you a really good ex... Can I give you one example of like, where the youth are like, "we're good."

Hollywood Jade 13:05

Sis, talk yo shit, this is - go ahead! (chuckling)

Samantha Bitty 13:08

So I run a, one of the things I do one of my main bodies of work is this trivia game called "Sexy sexual health trivia" and it is like an interact-, it's actually what I'm going to be doing for Pride, so that's really exciting - it's like an interactive video game, or an interactive game show. I'm, I'm, I'm jushed up, I'm all, you know, I'm this character, and I ask true or false questions, multiple choice, whatever, to invite conversations about different things about sex in relationships. Anyway, one of the questions I like to ask youth is, like, true or false, only girls get periods. And now when I asked this question, when people are age, they're like, true, whatever. And I'm like, Hm. When I asked like a 14 year old, they're like, false. I'm like, tell me why? They're like, gender is a construct, like gender doesn't have anything to do with if you have a uterus or not, like, people who aren't girls get periods, like that, and they say it, they say it was so much confidence -

Hollywood Jade 13:59

And conviction.

Samantha Bitty 14:00

- conviction, and they're just like, "Uh gender is a construct!" I'm like, okay, and it's not just, it's not just replicating those words, they're actually doing the work inside to dismantle what that means and that's dope. It's, it's so exciting. And so while I can't say certain things, I'm like, I always walk away from it feeling like "can someone cryofreeze me and wake me up when they're gosh

Hollywood Jade 14:26

When they're our age?! (Samantha laughing)

Samantha Bitty 14:29

so I can have a viable partner, please, like, please, please. (both laughing)

Hollywood Jade 14:33

So um, I, you, I love you, I love that you're, you're taking this conversation in all the directions naturally that I wanted to go in. So thank you for making my job so much easier. I ain't gotta like pull it out to you, you're just, you're just giving it to me. So I want to go back to the beginning of how you got into this type of work.

Samantha Bitty 14:56

I mean, so I am someone who's always been interested in sex and relationships. As my bio said, I'm a quintuple fire-sign, so I'm an Aries, my Venus is in Aries. I stay horny, I'm Trinidadian, I got a long eye. Like there's so many different reasons why, okay.. (both laughing) You

Hollywood Jade 15:20

I have a long eye.. yes!

Samantha Bitty 15:21

I have a long eye, that's part of, that's part of my ancestry. And I've talked about it with feeling worse, I'm like, why am I like this? why am I like this? And I'm like, I'm willing to get my heart broken and getting my back broke out. And I think that that has to do with being an Aries and Venus as well as being of Trinidadian ancestry. So

Hollywood Jade 15:39

I'm gagging.

Samantha Bitty 15:40

Anyway

Hollywood Jade 15:41

She said, I am willing to get my heart broken to get my back broken (Samantha laughing). Listen! Listen! that's good, that's good. (both laughing)

Samantha Bitty 15:52

I'm in therapy, so it's like, that's where you get those click those, clarify those clear moments, where you're like, okay I finally understand myself. So to your point, I, I have always been interested in sex and relationships. I had really terrible sex ed, like I had really, like, you know, like, a lot of us like, I'm comprehensive when I tried to bring questions to my, you know, my mom, like she used to have Cosmo lying around, and I'd be like, Mom, what's uh, what's an orgasm? She's like, it's a feeling you get when you have sex. I was like, Okay! And then like, Cosmo made it sound like an orgasm was something I wanted to have, and so I started, - I can swear it's okay, right?!

Hollywood Jade 16:31

I'm living! I think it's about the most authentic experience of, version of you.

Samantha Bitty 16:37

Right. (Samantha laughing)

Hollywood Jade 16:38

They pride might edit. Put some bleep in there. Yeah, you know,

Samantha Bitty 16:43

Okay. And, you know, so I started fucking, and I had all these unwanted, like, the way we would call it as, like "unwanted outcomes," you know?! Like, I had a lot of negative experiences. I grew up in Scarborough, the like, the dynamics around sex and gender and race, they're all things that I didn't understand but was subject to.

Hollywood Jade 17:02

Ahem.

Samantha Bitty 17:02

And, you know, when I, then when I started to access sexual health care in like, from a health care provider, whatever, it was just there were just negative experiences, whether like, I didn't feel like I had choice, or like, I just like, felt bad, or they didn't give me the information I needed.

Hollywood Jade 17:18

Oooh.

Samantha Bitty 17:18

And I had an experience at like, age 16, 17, where it was like the final straw, and I was like, You know what, I want to be the person on the other end of this conversation. I want to be the person who's doing the counseling when someone is accessing abortion. I want to be the person who's doing the education and the health care when they have questions about sex and relationships and all of that. And so, I got a job at a sex toy shop. (Samantha laughing)

Hollywood Jade 17:48

Sorry, no, I'm listening to you. And it's just, it's so refr- it's so refreshing to hear that you took something that was negative and bad, and were like, "I don't believe that this is what it has to be, I can change this." And you, you did the work to find better outcomes and better solutions for yourself. That's so powerful.

Samantha Bitty 18:11

Thank you. Aww. I think it's for me, it's the only, it's the only way I deal with, you know, "hardship." Like, okay, how do I, how do I make this for the benefit of others, because otherwise, this is some bullshit and I'm going to be stuck in a cycle of like self-pity for the rest of forever.

Hollywood Jade 18:35

There are so many people that I know - we are in the same age group - that are in our age group, who haven't had positive sexual experiences.

Samantha Bitty 18:44

Ugh.

Hollywood Jade 18:44

I'm just like, "Wait a second," 'cause I can count on one hand, the amount of bad ones that I've had

Samantha Bitty 18:50

Okay!

Hollywood Jade 18:50

And I still over, okay?!

Samantha Bitty 18:52

Okay. Okay.

Hollywood Jade 18:54

So when I hear people and they're just like, "yeah, I've never had a positive one. I've never." I'm just like, "lover, go, go do some research."

Samantha Bitty 19:01

We got a - what's your sign?

Hollywood Jade 19:03

I'm a Capricorn.

Samantha Bitty 19:05

Okay! So you're a cardinal sign as well. Capricorns.. Do you want to know Capricorn, what their, what, what my interpretation of Capricorns are?

Hollywood Jade 19:14

Give it to me, come on, yes!

Samantha Bitty 19:15

Yeah, so Capricorns are like, they know what they want, they know what's right, but they're also extremely playful, and like, secretly or not so secretly freaky. And I can understand how you could be, how you could move in a way where you're like, I have good sexual experiences.

Hollywood Jade 19:33

Yes.

Samantha Bitty 19:33

'Cause your intuition about people is good. And then you're also like, "I'm not settling for less than what I came here to do type" situation.

Hollywood Jade 19:40

Maybe.

Samantha Bitty 19:41

So that is..

Hollywood Jade 19:42

Yeah. All of it. Yeah. (both laughing) That, that, that and I know that for myself, and that's why I tell people all the time, I'm like, "it's important for you to to educate yourself." And I was fortunate that as a, as a gay man, my first gay experience was in the confines of a relationship with somebody who prioritized educating me on what was going to happen, how it was going to happen, how my body could feel. Like, so I went into it fully aware, like, that's how my sexual experience started as a gay man with another man, you know?!

Samantha Bitty 20:19

That's so beautiful.

Hollywood Jade 20:20

Exactly. And that's why I'm so into talking to you, because I'm like, so many people need this type of information.

Samantha Bitty 20:26

They need it. And, and also further to that, it's like, .. So something that interests me, so there is like, the information, right?! Like, there's the, there's the stuff we can tell people about how your body works, how whatever. I'm so much more interested in the process, and the ways that we communicate. So like, I like to teach people how to communicate, because - and like to normalize things like sex being about pleasure, and that sex is about co-creation, not transaction, sometimes, sex is a transaction, and that's all good, but not innately, you know?! it's not a..

Hollywood Jade 21:01

That shouldn't be the base of it.

Samantha Bitty 21:03

But that's so, that's so often how we understand it and like, as some as, like a woman, as a feminized person is, like, I was taught, especially as, like a racialized person as like a, like, a Black woman, as a light skinned person, you know, what I mean? It's like, where, where I'm located in terms of sex and desirability, and it's

Hollywood Jade 21:23

It's one track minded.

Samantha Bitty 21:23

What sex is for and who it's for, that's a, there's a lot of unlearning I had to do around that.

Hollywood Jade 21:29

Uh!

Samantha Bitty 21:30

And so it's like, the more we teach people to understand that aspect of it, and to like, neutralize that to flatten that to like, unfuck their attraction and like to understand who they are, give themselves permission to be, because

people bring shame, shame is at the, at the root cause, shame and colonization and patriarchy, which is the root cause of why we have dysfunctional sex and relationships, but it's like, you know, you as a, as a gay man, as a Black man is like, for someone that you were in partnership with, to make the space intentionally make the space for you to feel safe to explore, and to decide what sex was for for you.

Hollywood Jade 22:11

Yes

Samantha Bitty 22:11

That is so unfortunately rare, because the more we, the more we reside at those different - not, now we're getting scholarly - (SB laughing)

Hollywood Jade 22:22

Go go go. No, this is good.

Samantha Bitty 22:24

So I actually, I don't think it's scholarly, I think we could talk about in a way that we can relate to where it's like, you know, it's like, I wasn't able to, it's hard for me to define my sexuality because the ways that I've been taught to think about it, and the ways that I've been taught to feel shame or normalcy around it, coming from a Caribbean family.

Hollywood Jade 22:46

Come on.

Samantha Bitty 22:46

Living in Toronto,

Hollywood Jade 22:49

Scarborough.

Samantha Bitty 22:49

You know, where it's like, very early on, you get checked, if you are not falling into a certain type of behavior, appearance, identity, like whatever. And so we shut down these like parts of ourselves and we perform our identities or whatever, for safety, for security, for whatever. And so to be part of, it's so important to me to be part of conversations where the outcome is what you just said, where it's like, yeah, the first time it's like I, like, authentic to me was to have relationships with men, and when I did that, it was like, safe, and there was space for me to understand and that that was the foundation of your sex life.

Hollywood Jade 23:30

Yes.

Samantha Bitty 23:31

So far what's beautiful is you get to give like that, you know, it shouldn't be a gift, but you get to give that to others. And then people fuck you when they're like, "ooh that Hollywood, like honey." (both laughing).

Hollywood Jade 23:42

The name in the streets. This is so good. This is so good. This is so good. Like, and we are just, we are just having conversations around our experience and we're not even really focusing so much on the work that you're doing. But in having this exchange, we're highlighting the work essentially that you view you got why you started this, like why you went and got this job at the sex store. And, and, I, you sort of..

Samantha Bitty 24:16

Then I worked in clinics and then yeah, you're like honey is this the next shit?! And now you're here? (SB laughing)

Hollywood Jade 24:20

No, but like, I think, I think it's important to find the root of things because a lot of times people only see the outcome, they don't see the work, they don't see everything. So I'm like, I love that you went and got this job at the sex shop, and I'm sure that was immensely eye opening.

Samantha Bitty 24:38

Hugely. Yeah. I mean.. Go ahead.

Hollywood Jade 24:41

And then what happened? Because like I want to get to..

Samantha Bitty 24:44

Yeah, I mean, so also keep in mind, I was like, I was like 17 and like even though like I've been in the streets, I still was 17 and I hadn't seen a lot of grit like, back then we didn't have the internet, it was like we still rented porn like at that shop. Someone could come in and they could rent a VHS or DVD of porn. And like, they didn't return it, but it was still an option like that was the option they had. But it was it was an introduction to sex and pleasure in a way that wasn't Cosmo, or wasn't, you know, half-assed pedantic sex education in school, right?! So it was like, we would have

Hollywood Jade 25:23

Or a super glamorized version of it that they go in movies and on TV.

Samantha Bitty 25:27

Ya know, exactly that. And, like, um, and it taught me really early on how to have conversations with people about pleasure that felt normal, and fell, and in the public, like, we're in public, essentially, we're in a store, you know, and like, people have always felt comfortable talking to me, I've been, I've been an act-, a little activist, since I was like a baby. Like, I think the first time I ever called out racism, I was like, eight years old, like, I'm just very much that's in my, that's my disposition.

Hollywood Jade 25:54

I love it.

Samantha Bitty 25:54

And so people, people have always felt comfortable, and like, it was the first time you know, because we would sell sexy, and like kink clothing, right?! And people who in my mind, wouldn't wear a certain type of clothing, so I'll speak candidly, so it's like a "woman's lingerie set" right?! like a little, you know, with marabou, and whatever else. And so, you know, people who, at least to my perception, were men, right, would come in, and they would, would try it on, or they would buy it or whatever. And that was my first introduction to something outside of like, gender norm, you know..and like,

Hollywood Jade 26:32

What you were told was gender norms.

Samantha Bitty 26:35

Exactly, exactly that! That's, like, I did a little hand quote thing, no one can see that. So thank you for naming that. And it's like, so from there, you know, like, I did like a lot of independent learning, I got a volunteership at Planned Parenthood Toronto, so I was like a sex educator in the clinic doing pure work. So people would come in, and - for STI testing, or pregnancy testing, or whatever it was, and I would give them education before they saw a doctor, I would talk to them about pleasure, I would teach them about whatever, and I love pure work, like I love working one-on-one with people, but I was also like, I want to do this, like how, how I want to do it, right. Like they, they trained me a lot and they gave me like a very intersectional, for the time, education. And I've had a lot of access to education around values and systems of oppression, all that, so I've been really fortunate in that way. Um, I'm, you know, like, I've had any number of clinic jobs, I've done other jobs, I traveled and done work like this, I spent a bunch of time in East Africa doing work like this, like with communities of women,

Hollywood Jade 27:41

Beautiful.

Samantha Bitty 27:41

It was really beautiful. Like I was in Tanzania for the most part and like, it was just such a, it was such an eye opening experience to like build a, build, build a workshop, essentially, like a six week ongoing discussion with these women in this community and like, what it looks like to actually give education within a community and not to it, right?! So it's like, I have to, I have to speak, I have to speak about things in a way that reflects these particular people's experience. Like I can come in there and be like, okay, the patriarchy Ray Ray Ray, but they're like, if I say that shit, what you know, I don't need to get the details was like, Okay, what does it look like to actually give people and work with people to have education that is for them?

Hollywood Jade 28:27

Yeah.

Samantha Bitty 28:28

Not because I think I know, or because this institution knows, or, etc,

Hollywood Jade 28:34

Baby, baby, baby. (SB laughing) BA-BY! Even the way that you phrase that. And that completely changes the way that you approach talking to these people, you know what I mean?! And, and how they receive what you're saying. That is so good, Samantha,

Samantha Bitty 28:53

Thank you! I think and like, and it's what it was learning, right? Like it was, it's always in that, I think too that's the thing about my practice is like, I try for it to always be a learning experience for me, as well. It's like, I want you to populate your experiences into this framework of thinking about things, because as soon as we think we know, we have lost sight of, of helping somebody, right?! It's a, it's a co-creation that I tried to do. So working in the clinic was, I ran into a lot of barriers, right?! I ran into a lot of toxic white feminism, I ran into a lot of regulation of my appearance, the way I talk, and just institutions in general, whether they're nonprofit or healthcare, and I'm not speaking specifically to Planned Parenthood Toronto, I'm speaking, but I've worked in a lot of different clinics over a lot of different phases. It's bureaucracy and shit. It's people's egos. It's all kinds of stuff. And so I have historically been pushed out at any job I had, whether that was in a restaurant or in a clinic or whatever, because I refused to make myself small or to do what I don't think is right just because the institute shanae said, it's done this way. I'm like, Well, what I care about is it being effective. What I care about is the home girl going home with the birth control that she, she wants, not what you think she wants.

Hollywood Jade 30:12

Or what she thinks she needs.

Samantha Bitty 30:13

Or what you think she needs!

Hollywood Jade 30:14

She came in here and is telling you, blah bla bla bla bla blah, but you're not actually listening. And I think where you have been able to probably be the most effective is that your practice isn't based off of what you feel somebody needs, you listen, and then move accordingly.

Samantha Bitty 30:35

I try to. I try to. And like, I think too that there's like, I try to have as much empathy as possible, so that if somebody says something, so now in the work that I do, where it's like, I bring games and art to different groups, whether that's like a youth group or a university or whatever, I'm represented by the National Speaker's Bureau, you know, I'm nationally recognized -

Hollywood Jade 30:57

Okay pause.

Samantha Bitty 30:57

- as (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 30:59

I really, like, there's moments where I do these things that I really wish that it was being recorded, because I wish you guys could have just saw the body language of when she said that she's represented by, because yes, brag about yourself. Absolutely. Absolutely. These are accomplishments.

Samantha Bitty 31:17

What I think, I think why, I think, obviously, like I, you know, my posture around that is partially because like, "Yeah, I did that." But it's also because I do not have a degree. I do not felt like a formal degree, right, like, I don't have an institution that said, "This bitch is qualified to do this." I, you know, I break all the rules, in terms of how I should look, how I should talk, all those things. And there's still a, you know, like a National Bureau who, like my peers are like the leading people in the country and it's like, if we live in a time where a National Bureau can say, "Okay, she's, she's wilding, she's out of pocket, but she knows, she knows, and it's effective, and let's, you know, like, let's, let's back this up, let's invest in that." And then on the other side of that is these institutions and these people who are just like these other people who got into this work, because they, they feel the same, they have that same passion, they have that same fire, they're the same creativity. But like, because we live in fucking capitalism, they had to get a job in an institution and they got to follow certain rules, they're like, okay, let's hire her, because she's going to come in, and she's going to talk about it in a way that is comprehensive and disruptive and not othering - this is the problem, I think, too, when we talk about sex education that is, that is queer, that is looking at disability justice is like it becomes, we have to do this, we have to do all this self-othering before we get to the point where, like, "Can I just talk about it like it's normal?" Right, like, how I actually just feel. How I feel. And I think like, you know, in terms of identity and all of that, it's like, there are times when speaking our identity is really empowering and then there's times where it's like, disempowering, because we're like, normalizing this other center, right?! You know what I mean?!

Hollywood Jade 33:11

Ahem!

Samantha Bitty 33:11

And so it's like, even like when Leanna reached out to me to like do anything for Pride or to have this conversation I was like, oouf, like and I think a lot of people feel this I'm like, oh am I gay enough, am I Black enough?!

Hollywood Jade 33:24

Am I smart enough? Am I articulate enough? Am I enough? Yes.

Samantha Bitty 33:28

Am I enough? And it's like can I, can I take up space here, should I take up space here? And that was a huge barrier I had to overcome when I wanted to become an independent educator because I was like, uf, like, does what I have to say matter like is it you know, like, Is there room for another, another Black girl talking about this? Like all of those insecurities that get given to us like in the structures we, we live within? And I was like, and that's kind of where Samantha video was born, right?! Because my name is Samantha Vurrel [sic] And not only is it hard to say

like we talked about before like recording, but I, Samantha Vurrel is so scared like, she's yeah, she's she's also flawless, 'cause like you know, you see me here in my pajamas.

Hollywood Jade 34:14

It just is what it is. But.

Samantha Bitty 34:15

It is what it is, but like, you know, she's, she's scared of being quiet, like she's scared of making mistakes she's thought all this trauma, she's that but Samantha Bitty now she is da vitch, so I can just so when I'm her I get to transcend all that stuff. And I don't have to identify in one certain way it could be anything.

Hollywood Jade 34:39

I completely, completely and I'm gonna make this about me for like half a second.

Samantha Bitty 34:43

Please do - I've been talking for 700 years now.

Hollywood Jade 34:46

No, it's good though because everything you're saying is so valid, but I can completely relate to the same thing with, with, with you being Samantha Bitty and, and having all the stuff that you were born with. Do you know what I mean?! And the last name that people can't pronounce, and everybody says differently and it's like, Jade. Because my real name is Jade, Jade exists and has existed and will always exist. But Hollywood has allowed me to, to do things that Jade is too afraid to do, to say the things that Jade is, is, is has been told he can't say, to live the life that Hollywood is the inside of Jade externalized, you know?!

Samantha Bitty 35:31

Okay, yes, yes! And like, ah, like, when you spend your whole life with people trying to regulate you and check you and whatever, you make that part of you inside, like I said, you make it you make it small and you don't express it. And then it's like, so hard to be, I'm going to use the word successful, but I invite you and people listening to be defining of what that is, right?! So once, once I allowed Samantha Bitty, right, once I created her, and she was, she was allowed to do all the hair and the and the titties and the all of me everything. And there's no you know, and it's like, everything just came together and I wasn't scared, you know, I got to be this like vessel for this like greater purpose. And it's not about me like yeah, I joke a lot about like, feel free to talk about my nails, my hair, my lashes, whatever. Like, you know, like, I try to make people compliment me all the time, whatever, that's part of the character, but it's like, it's not for me, but that helps me that armour.

Hollywood Jade 35:32

Yes. Yes.

Samantha Bitty 36:39

helps me to do those things. Yeah. Yeah, the femme my, for me like my femme armor. It's like, okay, yes, I'm Yes, I am her, but it's also like, okay, she's, she's untouchable, right?! And that's why this pandy has been real hard, because I, you know, like, some of us need lashes, and it's like, that is essential.

Hollywood Jade 37:03

I mean, I feel like a bald crazy person. I refuse for anybody to see me. (both laughing) Because I love a lash. I love I love a lash. And me and my nail technician are good good friends. Like, I mean, "Hey, girl, here's your Christmas present" friend.

Samantha Bitty 37:19

Yes! I've given sex toys to my nail, my nail tech as well - Tim, I miss you! - like, like, you know, like that like, too like, though, all that aside, it's like those are those are my people because they like, you know, they, they help

Hollywood Jade 37:35

That's your tribe. That's your tribe.

Samantha Bitty 37:37

You know, I'm saying tribe can sometimes, I just want to challenge that a little bit tribe can be a little bit co-opting of them, like indigenous cultures.

Hollywood Jade 37:45

Yeah, yeah.

Samantha Bitty 37:45

So we say like our like, you know, there are our crew, our people, or whatever.

Hollywood Jade 37:50

Okay, and I thank you, thank you for challenging that because I, I am in a space where I really want to be as open to receiving other perspectives as is humanly possible. So, I love that.

Samantha Bitty 38:04

And it's not and you know, what, it's not easy and like, to, in the work that I do, right, where I'm essentially inviting people into conversations that are challenging to have, especially in this current climate, people are really afraid of saying the wrong thing. And all of that, because it's like, oh, they're gonna get called out or they're gonna get canceled or whatever. And I think all those things serve a purpose, but what ends up happening is we end up so stagnant. And so the reason why I started doing games as a means of having these conversations is because it's okay, maybe we're just playing a game. And so it's like, it's like, if you don't feel comfortable talking about sex, or talking about sexuality, or talking about gender, it's like, I'm just at the trivia game. I'm just, you know, and and so

Hollywood Jade 38:48

Smart.

Samantha Bitty 38:48

It's like that entry point into it. And then so when someone makes a mistake, it's like, everybody makes a mistake in games, you know, our self-worth isn't on the line, our character isn't on the line. And I'm so much more interested in process versus position, right?! Because it's like, you can say all the right words, but if you haven't learned to do exactly what you just did, which is like, Okay, let me receive information that's new to me and like, see how it feels, and, and then adjust or not adjust my behaviour based on that that process is going to carry you through your whole life. Whether that's in your relationships, or if it's political, or bla bla, I could teach you all the words to say, but you don't know how to like, and that's what I like about teaching relationships is like, as opposed to teaching you like okay, this is the, this is the G spot or whatever it's like, I'm going to teach you how to communicate pleasure to somebody else, what you want, how to hear what they want, how to experience rejection, which is huge because we stay like, like in this in this dating climate, you've got to be resilient.

Hollywood Jade 39:58

See, I'm not dating I, I am single and enjoying being single, because I was in a long term relationship and beautiful, absolutely beautiful relationship, but I knew that in the relationship I wasn't, I wasn't being the best partner that I could be, and instead of staying in that environment and allowing us to continue to further be negative and toxic towards each other, I said, I'd rather us go our separate ways so that we can find common ground again, and hopefully build a friendship and, and develop, you know. So I'm not dating, I'm not, I'm not interested, I don't know how people date now. Because dating I, like, especially us of the generation of a time who were used to certain things being a certain way, and it being the exact almost the exact opposite now, like, hookup culture was something that like only hosed it, like, you know, like, but now, that's, that's the norm that, you know, all of those things, it's shifted, it's shifted so greatly and, and I think it's, it's great to, to be able to have these types of conversations and, and, and explore what one needs for oneself in order to be successful in a relationship. And not just emotionally but also sexually.

Samantha Bitty 41:19

Yeah. And I love that you, I love that you, you framed it in that way because a lot of times when people are thinking about relationships, they're thinking about what they want, and what they can take. And that's just, that's individualism, that's, that's how we're socialized to be. That's why people can't be out here, this is why everybody's fighting about wearing a mask and all this bullshit, right? But it's like, what you said to me was that you were, you were self-reflecting on what you had to give.

Hollywood Jade 41:47

Yes.

Samantha Bitty 41:47

And you were like, what I have to give is insufficient to sustain this relationship. And therefore, I'm calling it, so that that energy, because the thing is, is our energy as much as it's like a, you know, a renewable resource, there's different things that renew it. And you're like, I need that energy for me, hon. And that is why I left my last, my last long-term relationship. You said the thing about how I've been a hoe, so it's like, I've transitioned well into this new client. No, I haven't, It's horrible, (HJ laughing) But like, it's fucking terrible, I'm like, it's really bad, we will

touch on that again in a second. But the way I look at what you said is, it's like, and I wish everybody this it's like, you know what, let's say, let's call it when it's still fuck this and not fuck you.

Hollywood Jade 42:32

Yeah!

Samantha Bitty 42:33

You know?!

Hollywood Jade 42:34

Ooh, that's so good.

Samantha Bitty 42:36

Like, trademark, like, just (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 42:40

You've been giving me nothing but gems. You've been giving me nothing but gems all day.

Samantha Bitty 42:44

My new dating guide is called "Leave while it's still fuck this and not fuck you." But that's, that is really important. Because the people that we partner with, we partner with them for a reason. And like, how do we how do we, how do we pursue relationships to their fullest extent? Sometimes we try out a style of relationship with someone that doesn't actually work for what we have to give, or what we want, and Ray Ray Ray. And we have to learn to separate our ego from that because like,

Hollywood Jade 43:09

Listen.

Samantha Bitty 43:10

Right, and I think, I think within the queer community, we have more of the like, there is that more normalizing of like, "Oh, yeah, like, we used to be together, but now we're friends, not always. But I think it's more so than when you look at look at straight folks.

Hollywood Jade 43:24

heterosexual relat-

Samantha Bitty 43:24

You know,

Hollywood Jade 43:25

Yeah, it's very like "I hate him" or "she's, they're evil,

Samantha Bitty 43:29

They're dead to me, like, oh, like you lose the, the friend divorce thing. Like all of that, you know, that's so much more commonplace. I'm still, it's like we, to take, yeah, like it's been learning.

Hollywood Jade 43:45

And, and life is supposed to be about that. And I think one of the things that I love about meeting you and having this conversation with you is that you've really, it's almost like you're, you're, you are a student of life, and, and you want to continue to evolve and continue to grow. And we got to wrap up in like five minutes, but I wanted to touch on what is Inner Development Project? And what, what what sparked this for you?

Samantha Bitty 44:14

Sure. So Inner Development Project was like the first kind of "formal" nonprofit type project that I created where I would go on site to groups of girls particularly like racialized girls, aged 11 to 18 and I would run different types of workshops with them. So like, I have like an art space body image workshop, and the healthy relationships workshop, I do trivia with whatever it is, and that actually perceived like, that was before Samantha Bitty, like that was and the reason why I did that was because, like I said, I- I'm very interested in the way communities access, access resources, and like trying to address the barriers to that. So it's like, I would go on site to existing groups, and I would like get to know them and then I would come back and like build that relationship because there's nothing worse than people popping in and being like, Hey, I'm this bitch, I'm going to teach you. And then I get back out you don't, you never see me guys like, No, I want to build a relationship with y'all. And, you know, I do that through things like talking about their astrology, like having little Kiki's and stuff like that. And like, because the way my nails are, because the way my eyebrows are like, oh, like "Oh I like your eyebrows," like though I see those as meaningful entry points, right. And so I would try to see groups, at least 2x to 3x for tight, like, go back. And I ran that for a few years, I still do it virtually. So it's like, I will do different events virtually, with, with the different girls groups and youth groups. And I did that because when I was working on Planned Parenthood, I noticed like a very significant, like need for especially young women, and like feminized people and youth to have support around relationships around body image and all those things, so I was like, okay, like, we need to talk about this.

Hollywood Jade 46:06

Yeah, Samantha, I feel like I have found a new sounding board, I feel like I have found someone who I can use as a resource to bounce ideas off of about the right language to use, right approaches to use, because I work with a lot of feminine identifying individuals and, and, like, even just that, like, I've never thought of saying it in that way until you said it. You are spectacular!

Samantha Bitty 46:38

Oh my gosh, I'm so flattered. Thank you! You are.

Hollywood Jade 46:41

Like you are spectacular. Um, is there anything you want to leave us with? Like, if you want to drop your social media handles and all that stuff so that people know how to find you, so that they can get in on this good juju that you put out here?

Samantha Bitty 46:55

Oh, thank you, honey. And what I will say is that I am a product of chemistry. So you made space for me to feel like we could have a conversation.

Hollywood Jade 47:06

Like I am a product of chemistry, like Do you hear the way that you speak? This is good stuff.

Samantha Bitty 47:14

I am underrated, hon? You know, like, no, (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 47:17

Yeah, that's why that's why and I feel that and that's why when you, you did the body movement that you did with the representation that you have, absolutely! I, we have to brag on ourselves, and, and if, if we don't, who's going to?

Samantha Bitty 47:33

We will. And we have to take up space, and we have to give ourselves permission. And I think if I would leave anybody with anything, and so like when it comes to sex and relationship stuff, the one thing we didn't get to talk about is how important I think it is that we understand that it can be so fluid, you know, like, and that is different, than it's spiritual, that it's emotional, that it's mental, that it's psychological. And like..

Hollywood Jade 48:03

There's layers.

Samantha Bitty 48:04

There's so many and like, more will be revealed. Like I think that it's an ongoing conversation and like, I look forward to part two of this interview.

Hollywood Jade 48:14

Agreed.

Samantha Bitty 48:15

Next month. Yeah. (laughing) Or just our separate podcasts that we've started, like whatever. I say, you know,

Hollywood Jade 48:23

If you're looking for people to participate in your Sexy Sexual Health Trivia, you've got a volunteer, honey, and I'm an open book.

Samantha Bitty 48:32

I love it. I love it.

Hollywood Jade 48:33

Thank you so much for joining us.

Samantha Bitty 48:35

Thank you for having me. Yeah, this was really nice.

Hollywood Jade 48:37

And I can't thank you enough. Everybody, I hope that you have your notepads and you're taking notes and you'll go back and listen and revisit this conversation if you ever need to find language or a way to approach dealing with these, these types of conversations and the subject matters, Samantha has provided us with amazing entry points to dealing with uncomfortable conversations. Samantha, thank you, thank you so much. Thanks, Hollywood! Until next time - You're so welcome - Until next time, peace, love and hair grease, everybody.