

Ep #71: Rewriting the Mythology of Creativity



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Leah Badertscher

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“Fear, to a great extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves, and so I chose to tell myself a different story from the one women are told. I decided I was safe. I was strong. I was brave. Nothing could vanquish me.” Cheryl Strayed.

I want to take those words and not just repeat pretty words to you, but live by them. I want to be able with you to be authentic, to ask the hard questions, to talk about creativity in all its glory, but also all its mess and mystery. So, listen in today as we talk about the mythology that shapes our lives, the mythology that we maybe submit to and are submissive to even unconsciously, and how we can awaken to that mythology, and how we can begin to rewrite the stories that shape our lives. Because one thing I know is that for whatever we are creating in life, it starts with the story we are telling.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money and the struggle out of making art. Here's your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello, everyone, and welcome back. I am not even quite sure how to begin today's episode other than by telling you it will be different. From the beginning, I knew that I wanted this podcast to be different. Not by trying to be different, but by being an authentic expression. So, the backstory of today's podcast is that I actually had already recorded the podcast for today, and the way things are going in this world this week, it's a little topsy-turvy.

I thought long and hard about what I want this podcast to be for you, and I think naturally, as just who I am built to be in the world, I am a safe haven for people. I am a sanctuary. My coaching does that. My coaching, I feel like it's what I've been training for and built for all my life, is helping other

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people find stability within themselves, find and strengthen their own spiritual backbone so that they can flow what they were meant to flow in the world and be who they're meant to be in the world.

So, when I'm recording this, it's at what I hope is height of the Coronavirus, and even just up close here where fortunately everyone has been well, but my husband works at Notre Dame, and they have closed classes, taking all the necessary precautions. Classes are closed. The campus is closed a week beyond spring break. Then they're going to online classes. My children's school is closed for two weeks starting Monday. I have clients who are impacted by things happening in the world, and I'm holding a space for all of it.

I wanted this episode, in between interviews I've done with people, to be a place you can come and feel that your spirit is restored. I've also have had these few themes that have been swirling about my consciousness for years, and for some reason, seemed to have converged this week and really wanting to be talked about. Again, this is going to be a little bit messy you all. So, hang with me.

I recorded this podcast. These two themes I'm talking about, mythology and this wilding, or like a return to the wild or un-taming, have been themes I've been fascinated by and unleashing of creative genius. I recorded a podcast earlier today about the convergence of these themes. I thought I was talking about mythology in the sense of the Encyclopedia Britannica definition of mythology.

I didn't want to talk to you about a myth as in a legend, or something that was false, or a pretty fairy tale. What I'm talking about is the kind of myth, again, quoting Encyclopedia Britannica, that provides guidance for crucial elements in human existence. War and peace, life and death, truth and falsehood, good and evil. That's why I love the study of myth, and also as

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Joseph Campbell writes, “What all myths have to deal with is the transformation of consciousness.”

That you're thinking in this way, and now you have to think in that way. That's the kind of myth that I'm interested in, and so when I recorded this podcast earlier today, I thought, “Yes, this is what I'm talking about, this convergence of the mythologies that we subscribe to unconsciously or consciously, and also the ability we have to co-create and to write a new mythology going forward.”

The intersection of that with this theme of wildness because I feel like as women, as creatives, if you're speaking about the archetype of the feminine, the archetype of the artist, I feel you've been dealt a short hand in a lot of the myths, the grand mythology, the archetypes that have been handed down to us because personally, as I have tried them on in my own life, and I've worked with so many clients, women, and also people, men and women, people of the spectrum of gender identity who are creative, who have felt they just don't fit into the mythology that we've inherited, that we feel constricted and always not good enough.

So, for a long time, and it occurred to me initially as this inspiration I had for a novel about writing a modern mythology for what it is to be creative, for what the divine feminine is about, about what it is to be a woman. It's very much about this un-taming process in the re-wilding process because I think so much of the mythology we've been handed down has been a mythology of misogyny and a mythology of being fearful of the creative.

That manifests as this shame, and that we don't know why we have this shame about being just who we are built to be in the world, but it's this desire to be and express everything we came to express in this world, and then at the same time, a holding back. So, let me pull back for a minute because I've thought about these things.

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From 30,000 feet, I've thought about them up close. I've read about them. I've written about them. I've worked with it in real life scenarios with myself and my clients. I've read so much mythology. I have thought about it in terms of how I would write this in a fictional novel, and then brings me to today where I am at my desk in my house as a 41-year-old woman with three children, and a husband, and a business, and two paintings to commission to finish, and podcasts to do, and coaching clients to work with, and dealing with the rubber meets the road scenario of wanting to do right by all the people.

Then also wanting to live in this space where I'm exploring the big questions and going to the places where I don't always have the answers, which is really interesting as a coach because as a coach for creative professionals, for people who are world class in their industries, who are performing at the top of the top levels, I am amazing and always on point with finding solutions for them, with being the woman with the answer, who gets them the result, who does not let them down, and I love that.

I love that intensity that I find, and that focus that I find, and the way that I just can come through for my clients. I also, as a creative then, I'm walking this line of wanting to live in a space where I don't always have the answers. So, that brings me to this afternoon of, "Oh, my gosh."

I thought I would just churn out this little podcast about mythology, mythology of women, and artists, and rewriting that mythology and what it means to rewrite that mythology, and what this theme of wildness means, and all the ways that's coming up in life these days, and it does not want to be nailed and answered in an afternoon. Imagine that.

So, what I did is I really thought about it. I recorded that whole podcast and I was like, "That's not it." I have some other podcasts lined up to send off to you. I've done a lot of amazing interviews lately that I'm really excited to share with you, and also at this time in the world, I wanted the space for

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you to come to. I wanted to speak to you about this. I also feel like this is a little bit of a fork in the road for me creatively, and thinking of my work as a coach, but also a creative and someone who thinks deeply about things.

So, as fortune would have it, tonight I had made a date with a girlfriend of mine, a late birthday date. We were going to go to this dance class that I love, and then we were going to go out. Immediately after the workout class, we were going to go out and have dinner and a drink because working out, and then having a burger. Why not?

Also, I am so grateful for all of the amazing women friends in my life. They're such a talented dynamic, extraordinary group, and I often think there was a period in my life where I did not have this kind of female friendship. I'm so grateful for it now, and I often think that my seven-year-old self would be so geeking out over the women friends that I have in my life now, and the creative friends that I have in my life.

My friend Laura and I went to dance class, and then dinner, and Laura happens to be Shakespearian scholar and a women's studies scholar. Her PhD is in the humanities, Shakespeare, medieval history, literature, women's studies. She's the chair of an English department at a private school, and an amazing person to bounce ideas off of.

So, I was telling her about the podcast that I had created this afternoon, but then I was also struggling to create and also how it represented this fork in the road, I feel, for me, going forward, because there are a lot of coaches out there who always have the answer, and it's always about presenting the problem, and then the solution, and then moving forward.

I want to say this from a place where I'm not posturing, and I'm completely sincere. I would put myself up against any coach out there when it comes to mentoring and coaching an artist or a creative in bar none hands down. I would bet on myself every single time. There's just something that I do. I

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don't even know how I do it, but I know how good I am. I know where I am and that I'm in a league of my own when it comes to coaching, mentoring, creatives, visionaries, this sort of person.

I don't know anybody else who does what I do in the way that I do it, and then I also have this other side that's really interesting because it's entrepreneurial. So, when I look at the rest of the world, they're always offering pat solutions where I know I'm going to be in integrity with myself. I'm always going to be having to push the bounds of being in a place where there's something new. I almost got it. I don't quite have it. I can't always seal it up and package it in a pretty, three-step process, but I'm onto something.

I also know I'm the type of creative who doesn't just do it in isolation, but I am not a lone wolf. My clients, my audience, thinking about the end recipient of a painting for me helps me channel something and makes me come alive. It's really interesting for being an introvert. I'm a much more communal animal and a communal creative than I really ever thought before.

So, I was sharing this with my friend Laura, who again, I said is a professor, and so among all these other things that she's great at, she also works with students, and drawing their creativity, and helping them cultivate their talent. She told me something tonight, and I'm like, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, stop. I should be recording this." I didn't record it. I will just have her on the podcast later because she's amazing, but I did have her pause so I could write this and send this into an email to myself.

I said, "Okay, tell me about what is your process then for creating?" What she said was so powerful for me to hear at this particular time, and so I wanted to share it with you as well. She said, "I don't always know what I want to say, but I do know the authentic problem I want to explore and understand, and I do know the story that will allow an audience to

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understand, and connect, and understand the problem as I see it. Writing and thinking is not about offering solutions. It's about showing them the problem. Shoving a solution down their throat is bullshit.”

That's the other thing I love about her. She's a Shakespearian scholar from Jersey, so she can swear like a sailor, and she sounds always wicked smart on top of it. But I thought, “That's exactly the words I needed to hear tonight,” is that to trust myself. This goes back to the quote I shared in the intro. I just want to repeat it again because it's very much at the heart of it, I think, about trusting ourselves as women.

This is not what so much of the mythology that we have been handed down teaches us to do. So much of the mythology that we have lived within has been about fearing ourselves, and doubting ourselves, and being ashamed of ourselves, but the Cheryl Strayed quote that I shared with you was, “Fear, to a great extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves, and so I chose to tell myself a different story from the one women are told. I decided I was safe. I was strong. I was brave. Nothing could vanquish me.”

I would add to that. I decided to trust myself. I decided to love myself, and that's when everything changes. That's when we begin to write a new myth. One in which women do not need to fear themselves, do not need to doubt themselves, do not need to be ashamed. One in which artists do not need to fear themselves, doubt themselves, or be ashamed. Where can decide we are safe, we are strong, we are brave, we can trust ourselves, we can listen to ourselves, and nothing will vanquish us.

So, this too, coupled with my friend Laura's words tonight, about writing and thinking is not about offering solutions. That, to me, again, felt like this gate open where I don't want to be trapped in a scenario where, as a coach, it's always about offering solutions. I really think my role is much bigger than that. I really think my role is thinking deeply about things, and

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knowing that I'm safe, and strong, and brave, and nothing can vanquish me.

Holding that kind of space to consider the deeper questions. The questions from which there is not an immediate answer. The answer I could give would be insufficient to you anyway, but to hold a space where we can collectively think about what is the compelling problem, and what is the authentic problem.

I want to explore and understand. How can I share with you a story that will allow you then to understand your own problem better, and maybe walk away with ways to understand your own life better, to move forward in a different way, to see things from a different angle? So, I wish I could have recorded this conversation I had with Laura over dinner because I allowed myself to stumble, to have pauses. I allowed myself to express why it is that I care about this subject even.

So, I'll do my best to recreate it here even though I don't have my friend sitting across from me in the booth, offering me the indulgence that a friend and generous listening does. But it's essentially that there is something about this mythology that we currently live under and that we currently submit to, even though something within us does not want to. It's like we have free will, we know that, and yet we feel trapped inside of this mythology.

The way I described it is if you've ever had those dreams where in the dream, you suddenly wake up, and you know you're dreaming, but you can't make your physical body wake up. You can't make your eyes open. You can't bust out of the dream, even though you know you're dreaming, you can't make yourself wake up to real life.

That's when Laura reminded me of the story of Plato's cave. Plato's cave being Plato's said, so, there's this fire within the cave, and the fire casts

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shapes against the wall, and so if you're within the cave, you see the shapes against the wall. You're like, "Well, that's real. Those are real. This cave is the extent of my reality," but then how do you ever break beyond that?

You could go your whole life thinking that the shapes against the wall, what you've been told you are allowed to be as a woman, as a tamed woman, as a domesticated woman, as a tamed creative, as a domesticated creative, as a long suffering, tortured artist creative, as a creative who is in integrity with their arts and takes decades to produce great works. You could think that that's your reality when really, it's just the shapes, the shadows being thrown against the wall. So, what does it take to move beyond that cave in what is real?

First, it's an understanding of the mythos that has a hold on us, and then it's having the audacity, the nerve, the imagination, the courage to begin to write a different mythology. I think it's also then understanding now that the mythology that we're currently under punishes that.

So, anytime you rise up to claim that kind of power, you feel shame, and it could be a shame that seems unrelated like a shame of, "Well, you have never been able to figure this out before. What makes you think you are somebody that can do it now?" All sorts of ways. So, it takes this relentless determination to get outside of the cave. I also know it takes this digging deep for a deep and relentless love.

Another way these themes have shown up, this mythology, this desire to write a mythology for the modern woman, the modern creative, the modern artist, the modern expression in rising the divine feminine, and also this theme of wilding and un-taming, again, these themes have come up in this novel that I've wanted to write. I'll generalize greatly here. The book is about a woman who becomes an artist by becoming a mystic, and by becoming a mystic, becomes an artist.

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When I say mystic, I mean the definition that I found when I was 13 when I was being taught in religious ed. We were being taught about in Catholic education about saints, and martyrs, and mystics, and this mystic thing seemed so otherworldly. I then went home to look it up probably in the world book then or the dictionary, and it said simply someone who has a direct experience of God. I was like, "Well, then what the heck? Don't we all have a direct experience of God? Then isn't mysticism something available to us all?"

It seemed so clear to me, and it was around that same time too where I found Joseph Campbell's work, PBS Special. I think my mom ordered the VCR, the VHS tapes, and the book from the PBS special, and I just devoured those and secretly hoped Joseph Campbell, my maiden name is Campbell, that he was somehow relate it to me. We just hadn't figured it out yet. I felt so connected to this man who had devoted his life to myth and to understanding the hero's journey, the hero's journey of the human soul through myth.

So, again, anyway, fast forward it to this book about a woman becoming a mystic by becoming an artist, and becoming an artist by becoming a mystic. Both of those things, I think, are ways of saying she became free. She became who she was really meant to be, and it reminded me very much of when I had heard Joseph Campbell talking about the metaphor is the myth in the Star Wars movies. About how, for instance, they would say a Jedi can feel the force flowing through him.

Even as a girl, young woman, thought of all the ways I felt like I could feel the force flowing through me, and already, I felt as this second voice come in that was not mine, that doubts that, that cuts that off, that shames that. I think as creatives, it's like then returning to that trust, returning that trust of the force flowing through us, and then finding ways to express that in the world unapologetically in its rawest form because initially, it's very raw.

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I think this is the place where the world is for sure very harsh on creativity and very harsh on women, is that if you're going to express something as a creative, as a woman, it's like it better be good before you express it. Yet the only way to do something is to do it, and is to do it over, and over, and over again.

So, I do hope with this podcast that that's something that I walk the line with here of getting my voice out there in the world. This is not the most polished media trained podcast you will ever find, but I want to be an example of authenticity. Even now, in striving to be my most authentic, I can tell you for sure there are layers. I still can feel myself being censored and held back. but I will get there, and that's what I'm continuing to go for.

Because, for instance, when I Google best creativity coaches in the world, because I've looked, because that's what I've desired to find for myself, I don't find what I'm looking for. So, I know that's what I'm trying to be for other people out in the world. There is no way to be that other than to walk my talk and blaze the trail for the voices that want to come after me and the voices too that will outlive me.

Creativity is a life force. It is the opposite of feeling helpless. It is the opposite of feeling you were out without resources. I just did a podcast with a dear friend, brilliant colleague of mine today, and she said, "Trauma is really refound." She's a psychologist and rigorously trained academically in research. She said, "Trauma is essentially where people feel they are without choice. They're without power."

I had this epiphany where I was like, "Yeah, then that's why creativity is so incredibly healing." Creativity is the opposite of trauma because creativity is about choice. It is about agency, and creating, deciding, having autonomy and power in your life. It is about not just being at the whim and the whipping boy or girl of a mythology. It is about creating a new mythology. It is about creating a new paradigm. I know that that creative revolution, that

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creative evolution, is what's right there. What we are so well positioned for at this day, and age, and time. It's right there for all of us.

So, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me and coach with me. I know this work is life-changing. I know it's transformational, but to make the work, work, you have to do the work. You have to take it and implement it.

What I want to offer you today is this. You are a master of a certain story in your life already. You know which story you're at the master of by looking at the results you're getting in your life. So, if you want new results, if you want a new experience in life, if you want a new journey, it begins with a story you are telling yourself. This takes, number one, and awareness of the story that you are currently telling yourself or the story that you are submitting to.

You are just saying, "Yes, I'll take that methodology, and I'll take that role that I'm given. I'll agree that that's the role I play in this lifetime, and I'll never veer out of that. I'll never challenged that," but one, it takes an awareness of the story that you're telling yourself. You have to pull yourself out and see the Plato's cave scenario is the reality I'm in. Is that really reality, or is that this fire within the cave showing shapes against the wall? What lies outside the mouth of that cave?

Then two, if you decide that's not the story you want to be the master of anymore, you have to decide the story you are going to tell, the hero's journey, you are going to embark upon the new mythology, you are going to write with your thoughts, with your feelings, with your actions, with who you are being out in the world

Third, you can't just decide that and have an idea. You actually have to live it, and this is where mastery comes in. You have to focus. You have to

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practice. You have to give attention to the intensity of the energy that you put into the story. You have to give attention to the repetition you give to the story. You have to master this new mythology.

Even if it's a mythology that is essentially aligned with you returning to your true home, to your returning, to the essence of who you really are, the mastery takes practice. It takes you knowing the story by heart. That means a neurological memory. That means knowing it, muscle memory, knowing it with every fiber of your being. It's a way of being that you have to learn by heart.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you have enjoyed this episode, if this podcast has been meaningful for you, the best thing you can do to pay it forward is to share, is to subscribe, is to spread the news far and wide. The best way to do that is to go to iTunes and leave a review.

When you're ready to take this work deeper, when you are ready to untame your creativity, to unleash your potential. When you are ready to be unapologetic about how powerful, how thriving, how fulfilled you are able to be in this world. The best way to do that is to work with me, and there are two ways you can work with me this year.

First, there's The Art School. The next session of The Art School takes place in the fall of 2020. Enrollment is limited though, so you want to go to www.leahcb.com and sign up for my mailing list. That way, you'll be sure to be the first to know when enrollment opens. There are two classes for The Art School. There is the open class, and then there's the masterclass.

The masterclass participants use both the open class, and then they have a mastermind experience on top of that. That includes private coaching with me, and then a smaller, more intimate group setting, and the master

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class is by application only. But if you are on my mailing list, you will get all the information you need about that as well.

The second way to work with me this year is through private coaching. To learn more about private coaching or to be added to the waitlist for private coaching, you can email support@leahcb.com, and let us know. Private coaching is also by application only. So, when you email us we'll take very good care of you, answer any questions you have, and respond with everything you need to get that process started.

So, my friends, to close the podcast today, I just want to remind you that whatever is happening in the world, I want to remind you of your power, of your agency, of what it means to be really creative because you can also bring a change and an energy to this world. You can take the chaos that's happening into the world. You can take that energy and create meaning, and beauty, and kindness, and love from it.

I wanted to remind you and invite you. I'm sure many of you have already considered that. So, less of an invitation and a reminder, and more of this communal space to say, hey, that's what we are about as creatives and artists fundamentally, is taking what's happening in the world and using, taking all that raw material in, and then moving the world forward in meaningful and good ways.

By doing that we write a new mythos. We write a new mythology for what it means to not only be creative and artists, but to be human. Along those lines, I wanted to leave you with just some inspirational, beautiful last thoughts. This actually was from Bill Moyers' thoughts about Joseph Campbell, his reflections on having interviewed him and known him for so many years.

He said, "Joseph Campbell was one of the most spiritual men I ever met, but he didn't have an ideology or a theology. Mythology was to him the

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song of the universe.” Music so deeply embedded in our collective unconscious, that we danced to it. Even when we can't name the tune, all of you out there are contributing to the song and the dance of the universe, and it's so beautiful. I'm grateful to be in your presence. Have a beautiful week, everyone, and I will talk to you next time.