Down to the Struts

Season 7, Episode 3: Exploring Disabled Power with Bri Joy Moore

Guest: Bri Joy Moore

Host: Qudsiya Naqui

Transcript by: Qudsiya Naqui

For more information:[www.downtothestruts.com](http://www.downtothestruts.com)

“community really shows up for you in a lot of different ways, I've found once you decide to be a part of it.”

**Introduction**

[jazzy piano chords, bass strumming with smooth R&B]

Qudsiya Naqui:

Hi, this is Qudsiya Naqui, creator and host of Down to the Struts—the podcast about disability, design, and intersectionality. I love a good podcast episode about podcasting. And today, I’m delighted to share my conversation with Bri Joy Moore. Bri Joy is a podcaster, poet, and political agitator

With a fierce desire to see disabled people of color survive and thrive. Bri and I talked about the birth of Bri’s incredible podcast, Power Not Pity, Bri’s growth as a poet, And Bri’s disabled superpower. Be sure to listen all the way through for a special surprise from Bri. For our younger listeners, please note that this episode does include some explicit language. Ok, let’s get down to it.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today. I am so excited to have you.

Bri Joy Moore:

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

I was wondering if we could start off by having you share just a little bit about yourself and your disability journey and how that relates to your many multitudes.

Bri Joy Moore:

Well, thank you so much for having me on the show. Hey, everybody, I'm Bri Bri joy Moore. I use ze/zem pronouns. And I am a podcaster. I am a poet. And sometimes I call myself a political agitator. I have a show called Power Not Pity. I've been doing it since 2017. And it's just been an amazing journey since the beginning, really, community really shows up for you in a lot of different ways, I've found once you decide to be a part of it, be active. So I guess I'll start with how it all began. So in 2014, I was just turning 25, five days after four days after my 25th birthday, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. And so in the process of being in bed rest, healing up learning how to walk again, learning how to see again, because I I had optic neuritis when I was first diagnosed, learning how to do just very basic things again, I started listening to podcasts. Because originally, I've always had a love a very strong love of music and radio. And so during college, I had five radio shows. And, I was the one in the booth at midnight playing metal, no one was listening, but I would do it anyway, because I loved it. And so, the jump to podcasts was really simple and easy for me. And as I started to listen to more shows, I started realizing, there's, a lot missing here. And my voice is one that needs to be heard, because no one's out here talking about the issues that black disabled, trans and non binary queer people face. And when you exist on the margins in so many different areas and identities, I mean, you you can really bring unique stories to the forefront. So because I didn't see it, I decided to create it. And that's how Power Not Pity came to be in 2017

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

I love that. And a lot of that relates to my own podcast journey. So I really appreciate your sharing that and how do you think stories can help to dismantle ableism?

Bri Joy Moore:

Hmm, that's such a good question. How do I think stories can dismantle ableism? Whoa, I mean, from the very beginning, I think that stories are so stories can be so intimate, and so far reaching that it's, it's, it's a really unique place for people to come and meet each other. and I think that, , a person can say, any given thing, but if you connect a story to it, it really makes it more memorable and it makes it more brings whatever it is you're saying alive. And I know that for me, stories have always had such a strong place in my life. Like I said before, I'm not only a podcaster I'm also a poet, and, I've been writing since I could write I've been reading, since I was five And I've always loved stories. So it just seemed natural to me to just not only absorb those stories, learn from them, but also create them.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

And your podcast really plays with narrative structure in some really interesting ways as you share other stories of disabled life bipoc disabled life, can you share a little bit about how you've thought about constructing your episodes in you've used, multiple different kinds of formats, shorter formats, longer formats, sort of pseudo fictional formats? personal narrative? Can you? Could you share a little bit about how you think through, you know, the way you construct an episode?

Bri Joy Moore:

Yeah, absolutely. Um, are we gonna get super nerdy here?

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

Oh, yeah, nerd. Nerd away.

Bri Joy Moore:

I mean, when I'm thinking about the construction of any narrative, any story I start with, what is the beginning, middle, and end? Really, what is what are these three parts that I'm trying to convey to another person about this conversation that, , could have so many different points to it? I isolate the most emotional parts, of course, I isolate those. And I construct the narrative by not only highlighting those points, but making sure that there's enough context and information involved to give people the best picture possible. And so I remember in the beginning, when I first started the show, it was just very straightforward, very, like, this is the interview. This is information about the person. And, one thing that I like to do, at the end of my show, every episode I asked, any given guests, what's your disabled power? And that is just the question that I close the show out with, because I think it's it brings humanity to disability. And I think, you know, as time went on, over the years, I started realizing, , I can actually break that up, I can change that up, I can create something different than just a straight interview format. So over the years, I've I changed things up and I included more of my voice, even. And it's just, it's been so fun to dream about what a story could look like. Especially like, when I get into sound design, and story ideation. I'm trying to think now I'm thinking about like, I'm thinking about one episode I did called “The Ancestors Woke Me Up,” featuring Leroy Moore. I think that that might have been the least straightforward episode that I've ever created, I think, because I created a series of skits for this interview, and I couched the interview in those skits, because I really wanted to illustrate Leroy's book itself. And not just his different stories in his interview. So all that to say, like, just thinking and dreaming up different narratives. It just feels so much more creative now to me, feels so much more embodied to me.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

Can you share a little bit more about Leroy's book and how you came up with these skits and what they were about?

Bri Joy Moore:

Oh yeah, absolutely. So that book, the ancestors, I think it's called Black Disabled Ancestors. And so in it, he's got us series of stories that are that feature different black disabled ancestors of his. And I decided that I wanted to not only put my voice in there, because I felt a connection, I felt a deep connection to the stories. I wanted to bring them to life and take them off the page and put them into literally into your ears. And so I just thought, well, they're already written, they kind of read like plays, why not just act them out. And so I made my acting debut on episode, I don't know, seven, or whatever it is. And I also sang in the episode for the first time on the show. So that was a lot of fun, too. Yeah.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

That's amazing. And I wanted to ask you about another episode. And I highly recommend my listeners, I spoiled a little but go back and listen to all these episodes. But there's one that you did that was just you, on the beach, as you you know ruminated about how your body has changed, and what that has meant for you your identities. And I wondered if you could talk a little bit about what that experience was like for you and how it related to your own, journey of disability identity.

Bri Joy Moore:

Sure. Yeah, that episode that minisode. That was, that was really vulnerable for me. Because, you know, up until that point, I don't think I'd shared as much about my personal story, because I was always so focused about amplifying my guests stories, more than mine. And, I remember I used to have this attitude like, well, you know, this, the show is about amplifying disabled people of color, and their lived experiences, right? Like, it's the show is not about me. But, you know, let's be real, like, the host is the main character, this is the reason why people come to the show, right? So, I decided to make something a little bit more personal, give people a little bit more insight into my life. And I decided to do it on the beach, because that's just a place where I'd found myself just being more often. And so I wanted to, I wanted it to feel like you're just sitting next to me on the beach, watching the waves hearing the birds.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

I really resonated with so much that you said and I have the same struggle, honestly, with my own show and my role as the host and what that means and where my voice should begin an end. And I 100% agree with the way you were thinking about it originally. It's the same way that I've thought about it in the sense of we're here to amplify others voices. And as the host, we're sort of like this Invisible Hand that sort of curating someone else's story. And we have responsibility in doing that. But our own experience doesn't matter. But I am curious to hear your thoughts about this. In the course of interviewing people just like what happened right now with you. I found so much common cause with people and their stories reflected on my own, and that sort of where I would bring my own narrative into the mix and connecting with other people's experiences. And I'm curious, I felt that experience to be so healing, um, in terms of my own disability identity, my own experiences of discrimination and powerlessness. And, I really the the podcast for me, has been a way in some sense for me to cultivate and in some ways regain my own power, my own sense of embodiment. And I'm curious, if you felt have felt that in the course of making your show?

Bri Joy Moore:

Oh, absolutely. I have. Absolutely. I don't think I would have the friends I have if I hadn't done this show. I think that if I hadn't done this show, I would probably be a lot lonelier. You know, I'm, my, my friends joke. And they say that after every episode, I gain a new friend. But it's true. After every episode, we have this really amazing, beautiful conversation. And, next thing I know, I'm calling up the last guest that I had. And okay, so I'll give you an example. I have a new season that's in production right now. And what I want to do is to only focus on the stories of black trans disabled people for the season. And one of the people who I interviewed, ended up on my support team for my top surgery. That happened back in March. And I didn't even really know this person. But this person was felt such a strong sense of connection and camaraderie with me that he immediately volunteered to be on my support team. And I just am so grateful to all the people who have shown up for me who have told me how much the show means to them, how influential It's been, like, I am just blown away. Honestly, I got to expect but you know, but it's, it's been phenomenal.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

I agree. I've had the same exact experience. There's many people who I've interviewed who have become dear, dear, dear, dear friends who I feel a great connection with and who've shown up for me in all sorts of different ways. And I've shown up for them. And it's just, it's really, it's it's something I really didn't expect from this experience. All I was not looking. But in some ways, the podcast was a vehicle for building my own like personal community, which is really amazing. And I had to contain my my squeal of Glee when I heard that you are in production for your next season. I can't wait. So excited. So excited to hear that and definitely will promote it, of course. So, in addition to you know, producing your next season, what else have you been up to Bri?

Bri Joy Moore:

I've been writing a lot been like writing solidly, like multiple times a week. I just started a queer ESL class. And I feel like I don't know what I'm getting myself into, but I'm excited. I am gearing up to write more, perform more of my poetry. And I actually just recently got into this fellowship for disabled poets called Zoeglossia. And it's been amazing. I like I mentioned just earlier, I also had top surgery in March, so about three months ago, so I'm still healing and I have to remind myself like hey, you know like, It's okay you can take it easy because you still healing boo. Like chill out. But yeah, so you know, I'm like producing this podcast, learning more about podcasting always. You know, trying to connect with people go to conferences. Yeah, I I have been solidly He doing that and also, starting this whole journey of a poetry career, I hope to one day have a book out and a couple of years. I don't know, the timeline on that, but it's gonna happen one day, you'll see my book in the library and be able to hold it. And that will be like, I don't know. Such a major life life goal accomplished. So I hope to have that done in a couple of years.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

That's very exciting. And I'm so happy that you've been able to return to poetry, which is kind of sounds like where you started. And to that end, I wondered Bri, if you could grace us by sharing one of your poems.

Bri Joy Moore:

Absolutely. I would love to. Okay, so just a little content notice. This poem has many curse words. And it is filled with disabled joy. It's called “When I Will Around.” And the word will is something that I repeat, it's the name of my wheelchair. It's a Will. So yeah, this is “When I Will Around.”

[Spirited, twinkly beats]

nobody can tell me shit.

When I'm rolling through these streets.

Move out my way

Because I'm running on a four

only wishing there was a speed higher than hair.

A speed to leave all the turtles in these streets feeling a whole lot of fear.

When I will around my spoonie friends want to know if they can slide in.

So we can all Roll Deep.

There might be three of us.

But that's enough to take up these motherfucking streets.

Because we the obstacle gang,

We run this shit.

When we rollin’ through,

Nobody can push past us

Or try to go around us,

Because they'll get clipped.

Maybe run over a short trip.

Face first to the ground.

Yo, when I will around,

It's like I can't feel your ableist gaze,

Sizing me up like I ain't nothing.

Point blank.

A zero.

But let me tell you something abled father fucker,

You ain't got zero on me.

‘Cause when I will around,

Nobody,

That's right,

Nobody,

Nobody,

Can match the freedom I've found.

[Spirited, twinkly beats]

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

Where do you see disabled media making going from here?

Bri Joy Moore:

Yeah, I love this question. Right? Because it gives me a chance to dream. I think that's that's a particular point of it right, is the idea that we are actively creating the future that we want to see. I think that's what so many of us are doing as disabled people as disabled media makers, content creators. The list goes on, right? Like we are actively doing the work. And I think so many more people are now becoming disabled or more familiar with disability justice. And it's just it feels more almost streamlined in a way. Because I think I think now that more people know about the movement. Now that more people are included in the movement, more people are able to see themselves in the movement, more content will be coming. And it will just be that much more powerful because so many more of us are included. Right? And I think I could definitely see like More conferences. I could see more meetups, more workshops, more panels. Just I just want to see more writing more. Everything. I just want everything to be about disability justice. Can we have that?

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

Yes. That's the dream. Bri, where can my listeners find you and your beautiful work?

Bri Joy Moore:

Oh, you can find me everywhere at Power Not Pity. Yeah, power not pity everywhere.

Qudsiya Naqui:

one last question for you, Bri, taking a page out of your book. What is your disabled power?

Bri Joy Moore:

My favorite question. Um, you know, that changes. It changes. But I'd say right now, my disabled power is my ability to connect with other humans, and other aliens are like awesome.

**Qudsiya Naqui:**

Well, thank you so much, Bri. This was so much fun. And thank you for sharing your poetry with me. And I'm so excited for your new season of Power Not Pity and just thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Bri Joy Moore:

Thank you for all your work, we're both doing amazing things in the world and the world needs more of us. So I'm just so happy that you do what you do. And you do it so well.

[jazzy piano chords, bass strumming with smooth R&B]

Qudsiya Naqui:

Down to the Struts was produced by Ilana Nevins and me. Our social media manager is Avery Anapol. With special thanks to Claire Shanley for designing our logo, and to Eiffel Gangsta Beats for our theme music. Remember to subscribe, rate, and review the podcast on your favorite podcast platform, And follow us on Twitter and Instagram at Down to the Struts. You can also get the latest updates by joining our Facebook group, Down to the Struts Podcast, and by subscribing to our newsletter, Getting Down to It on SubStack. We also love hearing from you directly! You can always drop us a line at [downtothestruts@gmail.com.](mailto:downtothestruts@gmail.com.) All of these ways of connecting with us are linked directly from our website, downtothestruts.com. And of course, stay tuned for our next episode, so we can get back down to it!