

Lisa Cole: I had, had a vision of her, not to freak anybody out, but I'd had a vision of her standing in our hallway right out here not long after I'd had my son who was born first, and I saw Ruby standing there at the end of the hallway, she was probably like a seven year old, around that age, and I just knew that she was coming. The cool thing is I shared that I wanted to adopt with a birth educator that I was working with, just like a mom educator, she was a doula and a lovely human, Nancy, and Nancy told me when I made that decision, she's like, "I'm so glad you shared that with me." She's like, "I want to tell you about a client that I had one time who tried to have a child for a long time and kept having miscarriages and was destroyed, just couldn't figure out why it wasn't happening. And then she decided to adopt and then there were hits and misses with that and it was just really a hard, long process."

Lisa Cole: And anyway, finally, she was matched with a little girl and it all happened and she was raising a child. And when that child was about five, I guess, she turned to her mom one day in the kitchen and she just said, "I tried really hard to come to you. I'm so glad we found each other." And when she told me that, like it still gives me chills, I just knew in my heart, I'm doing the right thing and my baby girl is out there. She's not born yet, but this is my path, and we're souls that are meant to meet somehow and we're going to learn from one another, and there's a reason. And I just knew and my husband was like, okay, he's like, "Sure, let's adopt."

Yvonne Lee: I have chills. Oh, my god.

Lisa Cole: Yes.

Jason Lee: We're Jason and ...

Yvonne Lee: Yvonne Lee. Wife.

Jason Lee: Husband. Father.

Yvonne Lee: Mother.

Jason Lee: Actors.

Yvonne Lee: Producers and seekers.

Jason Lee: Educators. Explorers of identity.

Yvonne Lee: You're listening to Lagralane Spirits, a delicious podcast where we invite you into our living room for a family spirit symposium, a real talk meeting of the minds over reverent cocktails.

Jason Lee: Join us as we dive back in time to examine the legacy of our ancestors that have shaped the stories of our shared cultural history. You can find all of our cocktail recipes in show notes on lagralanespirits.com. And as always, please enjoy ...

Yvonne Lee: Responsibly. Welcome to episode three of Lagralane Spirits. This episode is a three part series where we deep dive into three very different adoption stories to explore the topic of biological identity and origin. Today, we bring you part three of this emotional and intimate exploration.

Jason Lee: In part one of episode three, we interviewed Hank and Sueann Fortener, the founders of a wonderful organization called, Adopt Together. In part two, we interviewed Channing Power, a mother who chose to adopt. To get you folks up to speed, in part one I revealed that I learned my birth father was not my birth father, I've held on to that truth of origin for nearly 20 years only through the work I was doing and the research I was working on, on ancestry.com. That led us to asking the Fortener's the big question of, how do you maintain truth within the adoption story knowing there are opportunities to do otherwise even at the risk of protecting children? We then ask Channing a similar question knowing she is a mom who adopted a biracial child and is in communication with the birth mother.

Yvonne Lee: Please go back to the previous episodes to soak up their endearing stories. In this episode, we hear another perspective. Our friend Lisa Cole, a white mom, has adopted a black child. Jason and I are both multiethnic, I'm black and Philippina, Jason is black and German with a little Russian sprinkled in. This conversation of identity is huge to us because it is us. Lisa was kind enough to jump into the water with us and chat openly and honestly.

Jason Lee: Join us for a great discussion and remember to pause here and make this episode's cocktail. The old fashioned, our recipe is in the show notes. Let's begin.

Yvonne Lee: Hello, Lisa.

Lisa Cole: Hi guys.

Yvonne Lee: We are so happy that you're here with us, Lisa. For those of you who are listening, we met Miss Lisa Cole maybe three years ago through the film industry, the independent film world. We just bonded over how we see the world and how we see art, over the stories that she's telling. And then we found out later on that we're both parents, you have children, that you have an adopted child, and then all of a sudden, once you share that one connection, then the world suddenly slants to the side and then you're like, aah!

Jason Lee: So our audience may or may not know that I was adopted and I often say that adoption elements and adoption stories, for me, it's a bit of an identity for me. So as soon as I hear somebody else who was either adopted or has adopted children, it's an instant connection for me that goes even further and deeper into friendship. And so we've touched on some of those subjects and themes in our conversation, Lisa.

Lisa Cole: Yes, I appreciate that. I'm always up for a good cry. We're simpatico that way I think.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: So we bond with Lisa, for those of you who are listening, because she's a mom, she's a writer, she's a director, she's an advocate, she's a world traveler. And Lisa, could you just take a second to share as a filmmaker, a few things that you might want to share, that you're working on in terms of the stories that you're telling.

Lisa Cole: I was actually scared to death of the questions when you sent them over, and then I decided, no, I need to lean into them because there's a reason that I'm afraid of them.

And to answer your question, I think I write about, I didn't know this until I took a run like two years ago and it just popped into my head one day when I was thinking about the two projects that I was really pushing forward at that time, and they were both about strong women but self made women, women that didn't have a lot of resources or opportunities but were still forging a path ahead in spite of great obstacles. And I write about neglect in the world in which they live.

Lisa Cole: And I realized that I had never connected those dots until just a few years ago in that moment, and it's about overcoming that neglect and shining a light on it, and also asking larger question of society, and our community, and our world, like, hey what are we doing about this? And what do you all think about this? Because we need to nurture these corners of the world that I'm trying to shine a light upon.

Yvonne Lee: That's beautiful.

Lisa Cole: That wasn't very specific, but in generalities, that's what came to my heart and mind right now.

Yvonne Lee: Yes, I feel like as we discuss things that's at the heart of it, what's so beautiful about artists coming together and then sharing that passion but then also sharing a lot of personal aspects as we talked about in the world of adoption.

Jason Lee: We have that shared passion of telling these stories, we call them at Lagralane, we call them uncommon stories, intimate stories, personal stories that don't often get that light shined on. And you referenced in a conversation we had a couple days ago about, call it a docudrama, right, the documentary world colliding into the narrative world.

Lisa Cole: Docufiction, yes.

Jason Lee: Docufiction. Thank you. Yes. And I think there's a very strong element of emotional truth to be explored. I call it existentialism, right, where nothing outwardly happens but everything inwardly is changing.

Lisa Cole: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And that can shift the outward too for sure, the inward momentum and perspective or change definitely alters the outward eventually or sometimes cataclysmically or just like it can have a really positive change, it can be huge or can be minute.

Jason Lee: Yes. And the cataclysmic change emotionally and otherwise can go into what we're exploring in this episode personally and I think this is a good time before we get into the questions.

Yvonne Lee: So we've set ourselves up. Are you ready? Lagralane spirits cocktail confession.

Jason Lee: We're drinking some old fashions and so-

Yvonne Lee: Wait, you got to have your drink with you though.

Lisa Cole: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: You can give a clink before we begin.

Jason Lee: A virtual clink here.

Lisa Cole: I clinked my Computer.

Yvonne Lee: Nice.

Lisa Cole: This helps as a little liquid truth, right.

Jason Lee: Sometimes when you deep dive into some conversations, a little liquid truth can help you get there. But so are you ready now for your Lagralane spirits cocktail confession?

Lisa Cole: Sure, I'm pretty much an open book. So I'm ready.

Jason Lee: Let's do it.

Yvonne Lee: So for you personally, what has been your search for identity?

Lisa Cole: I think it's something that I put off for a really long time and I would just be finishing film school and I was 28 and I remember just being sad and crying all the time and having this really fun boyfriend who would just say, "You cry all the time, what's your problem?" And I didn't dare really try to examine it at the time and I also didn't feel like I had maybe the resources to fully help me examine it. And I was just busy surviving and treading water to keep above water, and to make it in the industry, and to live on my own in LA without any real foundation, parental support and whatnot.

Lisa Cole: And so it's been a really long circuitous road for me and I've done gobs of therapy and different types of journaling the artist's way and all these different routes to try to be specific about self. And I think I'm starting to realize that I feel more comfortable unpacking those things or making connections with self in the projects that I'm writing, so I turn to share other women's stories, I tend to do that and really glom on or look for and pour my passion into other people's stories and to help them come to light.

Lisa Cole: But when I was mentioning about the theme of neglect, when I step back and look at like, well, why? what is drawing me to this project in upstate? Or what is drawing me to the project in Northern California that I've been developing for over 10 years? What is the why? It's really this long circuitous route to self. And I'm not fully there yet, if I'm completely honest. I mean, whoever is right, it should be a lifelong journey and discovery, but yes, I'm finally starting to see more connections and I guess light bulbs going off like little synapses, is that the right word or does that mean a disconnect?

Yvonne Lee: Yes. No, [inaudible 00:12:02] they're connecting, so they're sparking and then that creates some kind of light or reflection.

Jason Lee: And that is a lifelong journey that we're on. Who said if we're the same at a certain age when we were younger than we've wasted some time, right. And moving forward it's the same thing, we should always check in on ourselves about where we are in any various phase of our life as we move through this and who we are now, we will grow from this place that we're in now to the future. And that's the joy and wonder of life.

Lisa Cole: That's the hope and having children makes one try to be aware at all, it makes one really want to resolve the unresolved because you feel every day, at least I do like, I'm a loser, I'm losing this opportunity, I'm not doing it right, it's so hard, the parenting part.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: And I just feel like, oh, gosh, I don't want to fail these two amazing beings that I have the privilege of sharing life with but I feel constantly like I'm failing because I feel like, oh, I'm behind, I need to know more about self, I need to heal, I need to do more work on myself, but where's the time? So I throw a lot of my passion into my projects. And I'll be honest, while I fully believe in them in and of their selves as their own entities, if I'm really honest and take a look at it, there are selfish reasons too which I'm understanding now which I didn't understand when I started them. But the selfish reasons being the quest for self through the art, through the work, through the process, through the connections, through the other person in reflection of myself.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. Well, I always feel, in terms of identity, I've never been to therapists, although maybe that's something that I should visit, but I've always felt like the art and dealing with my children, and understanding them, and having patience, and realizing what my own triggers are, because my child is doing it and they know what it is before I do, those kinds of things, they've really taught me to learn how to be present and be in the moment. I still deal with it every day, especially because all my kids all the time they're like, Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, they get to the 50th mommy and I finally turn my head and say, "Did you need something?"

Jason Lee: [crosstalk 00:14:24] They don't do that with me. Daddy doesn't get the same repetition that mummy gets. But I find, both in the theater space in theaters, this is the actor me speaking, whether it's performance or whether it's watching a film or a TV show, this might sound blasphemous, I don't mean it as such, but I find that to be a holy place. Acting 101 is to be there in the moment, nothing before, nothing after, take it moment by moment. And I find that to be very centering and that's what I love about what we do as storytellers, as actors, as filmmakers as theater practitioners.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. I'm curious like as you talked about what has been your search for identity, and in terms of in our kids, I'm learning that I need for my children to be able to say who they are to the world rather than the world telling them who they are. I had to learn being black and Filipino people might look at me and just say, you're black, but they would have a limited understanding of what black is or what Filipino is or any of those things.

Yvonne Lee: So at some point I had to decide to myself, and this was when I was in my teens, no, no, no, you don't get to tell me who I am, you don't get to say and look at me and say, I'm just as black. Which is very difficult when you're an actor because that's what people see.

Jason Lee: You get put in that box.

Yvonne Lee: I have to tell other people I'm black and Filipino. And I don't know that my mom really helped me come to that, it was something that I had to come to on my own. How does that work for you? I know for Jason, he's has white parents who raised him as a black

man, you're a white mom raising your black daughter, what is that like for you in terms of going through your on identity and allowing her to arrive at her identity?

Lisa Cole: Yes, that's where we're at right now is ... and maybe we started a little late, she's nine, my daughter who's adopted. I mean we've always talked to her about her story and we've shared with her as much as we know which is very little, basically nothing. What we do know is only because I did some digging right after she was born and just needed to know something, needed to talk to someone but it was very limited because of the circumstances. Yes, that one's hard for me because that's what I'm needing to learn and wanting to learn more of is how to give not only my daughter but my son the healthy legs to stand upon, the confidence, the self confidence to stand and say ... just to stand in their own knowing, this is who I am. They don't even have to say it, but just to say, this is who I am.

Lisa Cole: And I see that they're both really strong and I'm sometimes blown away because at that age, well, I guess it's not surprising given how I was raised. I mean, my parents loved us but they were very absent. My father literally physically absent and then my mom just she could never meet me, she could never meet me I don't think in much of truth, so it left me with this void for knowing and it's really, really intense. It's like a huge cavern of not knowing, so I often second guess everything and myself. And so I'm being really vulnerable right now. But it's important because it's really literally where we're at right now.

Lisa Cole: My husband and I both have such busy lives that there's not a lot of time to sit around and talk about these things, and how to support your kids, and for self reflection. But my daughter being black in a white family, I mean, it's so important and COVID has not been kind to that scenario in terms of creating more mirrors and doors for her because already our scope for her to have those reflections wasn't as wide as it could be or should be, and we were working on that and then it's like COVID shut the gates on that.

Yvonne Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: I don't know if that answers your question because we're really working through it. I don't have all the answers, and yes, I'm seeking those answers and moving trying to figure out the best path forward to give them the things that I didn't have, that confidence and standing in their knowing.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: I mean, this world is, I don't need to tell you, it's not a kind place. Thank god there are lots of kind people but man it's sometimes feels like there's just as many who aren't so kind as kind.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: Sucky because you'd like to think, oh, it's the minority, but I don't I don't know anymore. I just don't know.

Jason Lee: I appreciate your vulnerability and your honesty. It lands on me heavily because my adopted parents are no longer with us. I was adopted in the early 70s. I mean, I was

born in Nebraska and raised in around the Midwest in the early 70s by a white family who my dad was born in Abberley, Minnesota, and my mom was born in Des Moines, Iowa, and we lived in places like Decatur, Illinois, and Galesburg, Illinois, and I wish I could go back and ask them what that was like because as much as things have changed and we have Kamala Harris in the VP office and we had Obama, I am certain that not much has changed nationwide with the recent political events surrounding us. And so I do think that this is also another lifelong exploration that we are all on.

Lisa Cole: Can I really say one quick thing about that.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: I was just going to say that my mom literally would say to me, "You don't know me", and somehow it was like a defense for her, a defensive place, but after she died I realized, she died a little bit early from dementia unfortunately and that is just the cruelest thing you could say to your child. And so I'm working really hard on making sure, even though I screw up and I'm totally fallible, and I have so much to learn as a parent, it brings you to your knees, my knees every day anyway, but I just want them to know, look, I'm sometimes like, I'm just sorry, I'm human, we're human, we make big mistakes, we make stupid mistakes. And I'm hoping that just by trying to be more transparent and honest with them, that they'll find themselves better.

Jason Lee: Every parent out there has that fear, right? It's like, we could be the best parent on Earth, right? We're still going to mess up, we're still going to make mistakes, there's no such thing as being the best parent on Earth, right? You could be there all the time for your kid, but you can't. We were shaped by the forces that raised us, all of our kids are going to be shaped by the forces that raised them. How old was your daughter when you, if you don't mind me asking, when you and your husband adopted?

Lisa Cole: Yes, she was three days old.

Jason Lee: Wow.

Yvonne Lee: Safe surrender, right?

Lisa Cole: Yes. Well, from the time we started the process to the day we got the call we waited about two, it was about a two year journey.

Yvonne Lee: Oh, wow.

Lisa Cole: I had, had a vision of her, and not to freak anybody out, but I'd had a vision of her standing in our hallway right out here not long after I'd had my son who was born first, and I saw Ruby standing there at the end of the hallway, she was probably like a seven year old, around that age. And I just knew that she was coming.

Lisa Cole: The cool thing is I shared that I wanted to adopt with a birth educator that I was working with, and just like a mom educator, she was a doula and a lovely human, Nancy, and Nancy told me, when I made that decision, she's like, "Oh, I'm so glad you shared that with me." She's like, "I want to tell you about a client that I had one time who tried to have a child for a long time and kept having miscarriages and was destroyed just couldn't

figure out why it wasn't happening. And then she decided to adopt. And then there were hits and misses with that and it was just really a hard, long process." And anyway, finally, she was matched with a little girl and it all happened and she was raising the child. And when that child was about five, I guess, she turned to her mom one day in the kitchen and she just said, "I tried really hard to come to you. I'm so glad we found each other."

Lisa Cole: And when she told me that, like it still gives me chills, I just knew in my heart I'm doing the right thing and my baby girl is out there, she's not born yet but this is my path. We're souls that are meant to meet somehow and we're going to learn from one another, and there's a reason. And I just knew and my husband was like, "Okay", he's like, "Sure, let's adopt."

Yvonne Lee: I have chills. Oh, my god.

Lisa Cole: I loved sharing that story with people who are interested in adopting because if you look at it that way it's encouraging anyway.

Jason Lee: No, it's beautiful.

Yvonne Lee: About souls connecting to each other rather than the actual there's the human way that we ... coming through your body, but then part of that is just one road to souls connecting to each other, it's one path.

Jason Lee: My adopted mother, rest in peace, she always told the story about how it was several week ... I too was adopted young, not as young but I was about six months old, and she always told the story about the time where I finally unclenched my fists and grabbed her finger and held her hand. And she would tell that story time and time again. I can think of no greater selfless move than bringing in an infant in the pure innocence of all of that and raising that child as their own.

Lisa Cole: I can appreciate that. That sentiment reminds me of the time, and it's not the same, please don't take this the wrong way, but when I took Ruby home to Arkansas for the first time when she was still an infant, she was six months old maybe a year. I remember being in McLeod's barbecue because that's where everybody, it's like Clintons, hang out and everyone went there.

Jason Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lisa Cole: I don't eat meat now but I used to, whatever, and we were there and this older white woman stopped me, I was walking by with Ruby in the sling and she stopped me and she reached out, and she was like, "Oh, honey, you're doing such a good thing for that little girl." And I was like, thanks. Yes, I just reject that.

Jason Lee: Sure.

Lisa Cole: And I feel like Ruby, she's just had a special journey. And going back to what you were saying about clinching your birth mother's finger, the thing about Ruby is, yes, she did that and I did things to really try to instill our bonding, I don't know if this is TMI, but I nursed her and I worked really hard at it. And you had to wear these little flasks around your neck filled with breast milk that I would pump or get donated, which is a whole

other crazy story I can tell you about the women that donated for her, including this amazing, beautiful actress who was like super famous, it's so crazy. Ruby has just had this blessed story.

Yvonne Lee: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Lisa Cole: But the point to all that is, from day one, my little girl, she comforted herself. And I have this picture of her, she's only three weeks old, I'll have to show it to you some time, but she holds herself and she never sucked her thumb or anything, but she just held on and had this sense of self from the beginning. And not that she doesn't need us, because she of course does and I don't want to play in to some notion that she has to be a strong black woman, because I want her to feel like she can be that but also crumble or fall apart and lean on us when she needs.

Lisa Cole: But boy, she leans on herself a lot, and sometimes it hurts because I want her to need me or want me more, but there's something deep inside of her that she knows and she'll tell me, you're not my real mom and we have lots of conversations about that because I can't let it hurt me, because it's not about me. I have to set the wounds from my childhood back and just try to help her.

Yvonne Lee: It sounds to me that, that's part of her identity, she's trying to figure that part out.

Lisa Cole: And to feel safe. At least she feels safe enough to tell us that, I try to look at it that way that she's expressing herself in really strongly a lot of times and I don't think it's a test but I know that it's important how I absorb it and how I respond. So I'm trying to be more and more aware of that so that it doesn't trigger things in me and that I can just try to respond with a place of holding for her and love. That's the ideal response, right? And I try.

Jason Lee: This is fascinating for me to hear this because I was adopted, right. And I know it's a two way street, right? I know I benefited from the family that raised me and I know they benefited from me being around, I know that for a fact. It's just a very interesting conversation and it leads me into our second question, how do you maintain truth within your multitude of adoption stories when there is so much opportunity to create stories that are meant to protect others?

Lisa Cole: Again, I just have to go back to relate it to the first question in the sense that I had an absent father for myself who really was notorious for white lies, but white lies as a child can be really huge because when you're standing in front of someone who's telling you a lie, even if it's a small one and they're your parent, and you know it, it's just there's this disconnect where I dropped myself, because I can't call him on it and I can't make sense of it, and I fall into this void of not knowing. Like, wait, wait, what?

Yvonne Lee: I can 100% relate to you, Lisa, in that sense, in terms of the absence of dad. But keep going.

Lisa Cole: Yes. And then a mom who was withholding and absent in another way. And not always a fault of her own because she was a single mom and really struggling and it's a crazy story, I won't tell you all of it, but like she became a born again Christian when we were living in California and we moved to Arkansas when I was 10 because she got married to

a pastor who she'd known for two months and we picked up and moved across the country and lived in a little Podunk town of 400 where literally the church that he wanted to be part of was speaking in tongues and it was crazy. It was crazy but my mom thought it was the Lord's will. And yes, I'm going to definitely write about that one of these days.

Lisa Cole: So that's my backstory and I don't want to bring that ... I do carry it into my parenting unfortunately and I know that I'm really good at providing for my children in a concrete sense. I got a roof over their heads, I have help with the babysitter when we need it sometimes, I provide, they have shoes that fit them, I'm like, you got soccer going on, you got it going on. But the emotional stuff is where I am always challenged to really step in because I'm much better at the other things. Yes.

Lisa Cole: Anyway, so all of that leads to when you want to protect someone I don't think it does them any, either of my kids, any service to pretend or to not ... like with Ruby, she wants to know her truth, she wants to know her story. And I know I'm taking this question literally but I don't know how else to answer it. But from the time that she was, I think I shared with you the other day, from the time she was an infant I remember carrying her through the library and we were entering a bathroom and an African American woman was walking out as we were walking in, and Ruby craned her neck and just stared and I was like, she knows that she's not of me.

Lisa Cole: I tell her she has a tummy mommy and a heart mommy, and I try to be the heart Mommy, but she does have a tummy mommy and it's important to acknowledge and it's important to tell her what we know of her story, which unfortunately, I thought at the time doing a safe surrender where it's an anonymous program, I thought that's a blessing, that's great, there's going to be less chance for someone to come out of the woodworks and try to take her away from us. But I know that trans-racial adoptees, if they're listening to this, they're going to hate me for saying that. But I'm just trying to be honest, that's where I was coming from.

Lisa Cole: But in hindsight, damn, I wish we knew, I wish it was an open adoption, I wish we had the history, and the name, and the photographs, and the in the interaction. I want Ruby to know and I feel so bad that I didn't want her to know, but I didn't know anything, it wasn't like I withheld anything. I just mean, for selfish reasons I thought, this is going to make it easier for us. But no, no, no, it's really not because from the time she was little she knew. And of course we don't have to tell her she's adopted, but we've always shared everything.

Lisa Cole: And one more story, when we were on a family vacation in Sweden, we went to Sweden and Denmark to visit some close family friends and I think Ruby was probably four at the time. We had pulled over to get gas and I went in the little convenience store to get snacks. So this happened when I was inside the store but Scandinavia is a really white country and there is very little diversity there, although more now, but apparently she said ... she was looking around, she was sitting in the backseat in her car seat and she told Mark, my husband and my son was in the car, and apparently she just said, "I don't belong to you people." And she was four.

Lisa Cole: Essentially like, I'm not on this team, what the hell. She's always known and so we have to try to help her with that. And she blames me, she has a narrative in her head where

another time we were on vacation and I thought we were having such a great day, and it was just me and the kids because Mark couldn't come. We were in Hawaii, and we were having dinner, and I was like, "Oh, my god, we're here, we did it." And I'm having a glass of wine, and we had a great day at the pool and the ocean, and everyone was still alive and nobody had a stingray bite, everything was good. And we're ordering dinner and she looks to me out of the blue and she goes, "I had everything I needed until you came along."

Lisa Cole: And I said, "Wait, honey, what?" What happened? I thought she meant something literal in that moment, or at the table, or in the room before we got down to the restaurant. And I said, "What do you mean?" And she said, "At the hospital before you took me from my birth mom." And again, she was six and-

Yvonne Lee: She is an old soul.

Lisa Cole: She challenges us with her questions and her knowing, and I mean, she keeps me on my toes. And I just want to do right by her. Gosh, I want to do better, I want to do right, she deserves it. So anyway, I didn't overshare but like-

Jason Lee: Oh, no, thank you for sharing.

Lisa Cole: She's a force of nature, I'm always in awe of her.

Yvonne Lee: Yes.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: Of course. Of course. Wow. You know what, Lisa, thank you for being so vulnerable. I don't know we've had a chance to really dive into in this way so it's just we have our kids and we think that we're supposed to be doing all the teaching, but they're really the ones that are doing the teaching. They're the ones doing the teaching.

Jason Lee: Learn it through their eyes. Learn it through their eyes, yes.

Yvonne Lee: So it's about learning with them and as a blended family, trans-racial blended family, it sounds like she's so ready to talk about race in a way that's very, very direct trying to figure that portion of it out.

Lisa Cole: Yes. [crosstalk 00:35:06] And other African American people, not even necessarily close friends, but I remember this professor told me one time, he was a friend of a friend, and he sat me down to talk about race and asked me point blank, "What are you teaching her? What are you sharing with her? Where are you?" And I had a question for him, well, how soon is too soon to share some of the sad, and scary, and awful stories of our country's past and history? And he was like, "Oh, now."

Jason Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: And she was seven at the time and he's like ... I'm like, because I've heard maybe nine, 10, and he's like, "No, now, yesterday, last year, you must start."

Yvonne Lee: I hear what you're saying, and sorry to interrupt you, but you want to show the beauty as well, right?

Jason Lee: [crosstalk 00:35:51] Yes, but you also want to show the truth.

Yvonne Lee: The queens, the kings, the scientists that we don't know about, the doctors that didn't make into history books, all of that, even like the regular parts.

Jason Lee: But I also have a story of being five years old and playing with my older brother in a sandbox and an old lady walking, a neighbor walking by in Decatur, Illinois, and a neighbor walking by going to my brother who's seven at the time, "Why are you playing with that N word?" And his response was, "Well, he's my brother. That's why." So I mean, yes, we raised with the power of our history but we also have to raise with the understanding of the world that we live in.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. So Lisa, I feel like we got to do some follow up here because this is awesome.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: And Jason and I, in our own journeys of what is abandonment? What is being found? What is finding our place and our identity in the world? And how does history ground us in that identity? I think all of those things are really important. Our personal history, our shared cultural history, and sharing.

Jason Lee: And sharing with each other, sharing with our children, sharing our stories, learning their stories, paying attention to what they're going through while we pay attention to what we're going through and each other. I mean, that's for me the beauty of what this storytelling element that we're all involved in. And that's the definition of what a friendship is, right?

Yvonne Lee: And we're happy to be window and mirrors for your child.

Lisa Cole: I love that.

Yvonne Lee: So if we can be, we would love to help be part of that journey for her.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Lisa Cole: Thank you so much. I love that and I love what you're doing here, and thanks for including me in. It was always a pleasure to talk to you guys. We can always talk for hours and I love that.

Yvonne Lee: Yes.

Jason Lee: Cheers right back to you.

Lisa Cole: Have a great evening, yes.

Jason Lee: You as well.

Yvonne Lee: After all of this exploration, how are you feeling? I mean, we've heard from two moms who've adopted kids just like your mom, and they've shared some of their journey and how they exist with their kids. We heard from the Fortener's who bring kids to parents, who come from a family of adopted kids. Did you gain insight on your mom's reasoning for not telling you who your real birth father was?

Jason Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I don't judge her for her lie.

Yvonne Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jason Lee: She was a child, she was 17 when she was pregnant with me. I don't feel it's my place to ask her why or why not. Why the lie, right? That's not my place in this story I feel. My place in the story is to find the truth. And through the journey of the story, I have found the truth. So no, I haven't gained insight into her reasoning for her lie, but I have attempted to understand to the best of my ability why she did lie, she was trying to protect herself. From what? I don't know, but I do feel it's rooted in that. It's a story she told herself time and time again that eventually she just accepted as the truth.

Yvonne Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jason Lee: An interesting element of adoption searches is you have to be very open and ready for any information that you receive because it could be anything. And I remember this is literally what a counselor told me when I went to Lincoln, Nebraska to uncover my adoption stories, he said, "Be ready literally for anything. Your biological parents could be dead, they might not want to meet you. The best option of course is that they're together and they do want to meet you, but be ready for that because they're going to come at you with their own stories that you might not be ready for."

Jason Lee: So how am I feeling? I don't know. And I think as actors we do our script work, right, and we try to find, what's my intention director? How am I supposed to attack this scene, right, like this is real life. So one of the weirdest elements about this is, I don't know how I am supposed to feel. Am I supposed to be sad that she lied to me, the woman who put me up for adoption based on family dynamics 50 years ago? Am I supposed to be angry? I've lived an incredible life. My adopted family provided me with love and support but beyond my wildest imagination. My search, my truth was never in place to replace that, it was to add to that.

Jason Lee: I'm feeling good, I'm feeling grounded, I'm feeling more reassured and reminded about what family means. I am feeling relieved in a way that I've conducted this search to the best of my ability and I've found the truth to the best of my ability. I'm saddened in a way because I will never know the hurt she suffered and she'll never know the same about me, I'm quoting Bob Dylan here, I really am. It's a wonderful lyric from Idiot Wind, great song by Dylan. And I'm also feeling proud that I stood in the middle of that and attempted to make sense of it to the best of my ability. So that's how I'm feeling.

Yvonne Lee: Jason, thank you for being vulnerable with our listeners, because someone out there really needs to hear your story.

Jason Lee: That's the purpose of story, right? That's the purpose of what we do, as storytellers as, as actors, as content creators, to share from a lens is why we're doing this, right. To

share from a lens to help shine a light for somebody listening to understand, on a deeper level, his or her own truth through the stories we share.

Yvonne Lee: Normally, when we're looking at identity in the United States of America, it seems that we're always doing it through this idea of what your race is and what your gender is, and it really limits us. And so in terms of, what are all the identities that are out there and all the ways that people enter into the world? And for us, as two multiethnic people to be able to be the authors of what does an identity actually mean and the vast difference between all identities, to be able to do that in a personal way where we each are able to talk about it and that it's asking us to be human and very personal about how we relate to the world, and that you bring your full self to into any room, not just the part that's going to make sense for you to survive at that moment.

Yvonne Lee: Well, folks, this was part three of our three part series on Origins. Please be sure to listen to all three episodes, your heart will be happy you did. Love you, babe.

Jason Lee: Love you too. Cheers.

Yvonne Lee: This podcast is produced by the Lagralane group. We would like to thank Lagralane Spirits co-producers and writers, Courtney Oliphant and Pepper Chambers Soraci, co-producer Matthew Soraci, podcast coordinator Amanda Dinsmore, sound designer David B. Marling, The Launch Guild, and Tobi Gad for his original piano improvisation.

Jason Lee: We'd also like to thank Podcast Haven and our guest and friend, Lisa Cole. Remember to grab our old fashioned recipe in show notes by going to lagralanespirits.com. We'll see you next time. And if you love the cocktail or the episode, make sure you rate, review and subscribe on Apple podcasts or wherever you listen.

Yvonne Lee: And remember to drink responsibly.

Jason Lee: Cheers, my friends.