

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:00:00](#)):

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Akilah Hughes ([00:00:30](#)):

Hey there, and welcome back to the Black Euphoria Podcast. I'm your host, Akilah Hughes. So Black Euphoria is all about the joy and inspiration that Black creatives found after seeing Wakanda on screen for the first time. How would our world be a better place if Wakanda was realized, if the smartest person in the world Surey in the film was also afforded all the resources she needed to solve issues on our planet? It's a good question, and one person trying to answer it is Lisa May Brunson, Lisa is the founder of Wonder Woman Tech based out of Long Beach, California, to organize a socially innovative projects like Equality tv. I am Equality and more, the links are in the show notes, but we had a wonderful chat about a better future, but also about how important it is to take care of ourselves as we do fight for that better future. Here's that conversation.

Akilah Hughes ([00:01:20](#)):

All right. Lisa May Brunson, thank you so much for being here. I was just wondering, what's the story behind Wonder Woman Tech? How did your organization come to be?

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:01:30](#)):

Well, I have always labeled myself as a social innovator. Someone that was just so ready to take on the world, even as a young girl. And so since I've been young I've been really focused on hopping into building campaigns, launching little tiny movements in my little world and really focused on human rights, equity, diversity, and inclusion and belonging before I even knew that those terms existed. And so one, I was doing some hackathons. I didn't even know what a hackathon was when I created them and some programming with Arizona State University in 2014. And along the way, I sort accidentally intentionally ended up creating what women's heck as an answer to all of the things that I had uncovered through my journey of building programs for people that looked like me, that identified as me. And seeing that there was this huge disparity between how people that looked like me had access to funding programs and just a platform to even be able to communicate all the great things they were doing on in the planet.

([00:02:58](#)):

And so water women's tech was sort of like a he to a call that I was seeing this distress call for women, bipo underrepresented groups who were just really looking for community for purpose, for platform, for amplification. And along the way it has evolved into a global ecosystem platform and organization beyond my wildest dreams. It's sort of like I just wanted a place of belonging. I wanted a place where I could allow the world to see that we exist and we're worthy of representation, we're worthy of funding, we're worthy of access. And so what a women tech has just evolved into something that is beyond me <laugh>.

Akilah Hughes ([00:03:51](#)):

Absolutely. Well, you mentioned creating just a variety of tech for people, but can you talk a little bit about what exactly you've been working on and the products that you, you've pushed out before Wonder Woman Tech, but also through it?

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:04:09](#)):

One of the Wonder Woman Tech actually was born through the work I was doing five years prior, or four, five years before that which was called Equality tv. And it's a little known fact, although you could find traces of us on LinkedIn and on the internet

Akilah Hughes ([00:04:28](#)):

<laugh> you have research.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:04:29](#)):

Yeah, it's like, yeah. And so Equality TV was a platform that I was trying to create an internet TV network that was inclusive that, and this was before Time's Up movement. So yeah, absolutely. I felt like I was ahead of my time. Totally. Because now had I launched, I mean lost the Domain, I lost everything that I was attached to that brand and identity and I do regret that, but I also felt like I didn't know that I was ahead of my time. I just felt such deep frustration that nobody was seeing how powerful and important it was to have media representation first. We know that media shifts shifts and shapes generations of perception and ideas and cultural influences. And I wanted to create an internet TV platform cuz I didn't know how to do a proper studio. Right. Yeah, totally

Akilah Hughes ([00:05:26](#)):

<laugh>, you have so many connections to do anything on television.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:05:30](#)):

Yeah, exactly. So in my world, I really wanted to build this platform. But interestingly enough, Akila, and it's so funny cuz when we talk about the metaverse as it is evolving, cuz it doesn't exist really, right? But as it is evolving, my original 65 business page business plan for Equality TV actually was more than an internet TV network. It was an e-commerce platform. It was a online community where you were literally interacting with each other as avatars. So

Akilah Hughes ([00:06:03](#)):

Yeah, you were, were ahead of the game on the metaverse itself, like this whole, But

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:06:08](#)):

I didn't know, it's like I

Akilah Hughes ([00:06:11](#)):

Didn't, Right. And also I think a lot of times people of color are ignored <laugh> when they have these great ideas. It has to come out of a white man's mouth, frankly, for the money to start showing up for those sorts of things. But it is cool, and I just wanna make sure our audience knows that yeah, you've been working at this for some time and our beyond just being great at tech are also incredibly creative. And I think that that sort of mashup is where a lot of our listeners exist. And I think that that's just really lucky to, to talk to you about it. I'm sure that you get asked all the time about why you focus on women

in tech. I think that that's sort the plague of being any identity that isn't often white or male is you have to explain why you should be there in the first place. So I wanna have the more interesting conversation here, which is talking about the impact. How do women impact the tech space now that we are here? And what has been the benefit now that people are aware of the fact that there was a lack of women and now women are given some space to at least create things?

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:07:20](#)):

Well, what I love that you're talking about impact because literally what a women tech is going to be celebrating 10 years next November. And so it's mind boggling to me to look at that <laugh>. Yeah, it's mind boggling to look at that because over that almost decade I have seen we talk about pushing the needle forward, which is such small incremental change. When you really think about that phrase, it's ridiculous. And so I think,

([00:07:53](#)):

Right, I don't wanna make incremental change. I wanna create a new paradigm here. So now that we are here, as you say, but we've always been here, and what I love about the Wakanda culture is that women were front and center at creating these technological advances. And going back to what we were talking about earlier about that visionary aspect, it takes brains, it actually takes that vision to create any kind of technology or innovation that exists, right? And women, what I've found is that women think holistically about creating products and technological products and apps and things of that nature. My time with these hackathons and sitting down with different teams is I've seen that a lot of men focus on the functionality piece and then women take that times 10 and look at it from a 360 lens. Okay, how does it serve ultimately, not just the people that we're thinking about, but what are the unintentional opportunities here for impact? And so I think women really, this is what makes us great as leaders I think as well, is that we can take a challenge and really think about what the intentional and unintentional, unintentional consequences are for developing that technology or that solution and provide even a better product. And so the impact that we have as women in these industry is so much greater than we can imagine because we get to solve big world problems by thinking holistically instead of like, Oh, this is a co function, let's put a bandaid on this.

Akilah Hughes ([00:09:46](#)):

Absolutely. And I love that you brought up the sort of bandaid issue because I'm not in the tech space. I use a lot of tech, but I obviously don't. I ever created anything with an app. The peak of my coding was like Myspace.com. I'm absolutely just a consumer. But <laugh>, I think that there's a real disconnect sometimes, especially with men in tech where they're solving problems that don't exist <laugh>, and then ignoring of problems that arise from that by just being like, well, this is the way the industry's moving instead of being more innovative. And so one thing that comes to mind immediately is Instagram. And this is just me sort of on a rant, but thank you for indulging me <laugh>. But Instagram in particular for me was such a great app because it was just photos and it was a good place to put them.

([00:10:42](#)):

And when Facebook and MySpace started, there wasn't enough bandwidth to have more than one to three photos. And then after a certain point it was like five photos and then they got more and more. But Instagram felt like this is the place to put it. And now, because everything is pushing towards video and algorithms are saying the attention economy is what's the most valuable thing. We have 50,000 video apps and rest <laugh>. And I think that this is a problem that, I don't wanna say that a man created this issue, but I will say that every woman I talk to is, yeah, every time I open Instagram, it starts

yelling and there's a video and all I wanna do is just look at a photo. And I wish someone would just invent that thing. So going off of that, have you found that in your own tech use and in your own of products and the things that you focused on in your world, have you found that you end up erasing the mistakes, <laugh> of the men who are following trends rather than innovating?

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:11:46](#)):

I love this because I was exactly having this conversation literally this morning where I was, I mean, true, true story because, well, first of all, my space was the cama of websites Back in the days, you don't even know that that's what you were creating. And honestly, I missed my space for so many reasons. It was an opportunity to really express yourself. You add static images, you added audio, you had community. Honestly, <affirmative>, Facebook came and really just changed the way that we interact with each other and we lost that sense of personalization. And I think at the end of the day when we're talking about, and at the end of the day when we're talking about brand engagement and storytelling and expression, which is why we use let's, let's be real, it's why we do actually use social media technology because we want the world to know who we are.

([00:12:46](#)):

We wanna be able to express ourselves hopefully in free spaces and safe spaces. But that's another conversation. But what's happened with Instagram is that it's become a place, and not just Instagram, LinkedIn is now following this trend as well, I've learned. And so it's catering to a creator economy, which then forces everyone to step into roles that we're not made for or designed for them. And we're not all, that's how we wanna roll either. And so I was having this conversation, I was having this conversation because I asked my director of strategy, another woman, and I said, We have to think about the kind of impact that we wanna make with the platforms that we're choosing to engage in. And if we're being called to push out content, content, content, where then do we get to actually do the work that we need to be doing on the, you know what I mean? Where do we get to the

Akilah Hughes ([00:13:45](#)):

Building? Exactly right. Everyone shouldn't be an influencer. You can be influential when you have the space to create, but just creating for the sake of putting crap on the internet is I think the detriment of society. I'm glad we're having this conversation because I think that it gets lost a lot of the time when people are just so excited about the future of tech. And I'm like, but you do understand that so many people now have a second full-time job where not only the thing that they're working on is their job, but now they have to talk about it at length and post videos about it and be good at editing and be engaging within 30 seconds and all this stuff, which is the return isn't necessarily there for most industries. Yeah.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:14:27](#)):

Well you also have to think about it akila, the learning curve. You actually have to devote whole days of viba. And my director of strategy just today, this morning, we're talking about, okay, who's going to take first shift of going on to the tutorials to learn how to do this, to keep it up, and then you'll take the next month. And like that is not what I wanna utilize my time. And as you mentioned, when we're talking about that real impact, think about, or the unintentional consequences, if we're creating technology and platforms that force us to be in this attention, getting a d d like, Oh my God, I gotta watch this, I gotta do this. There's no swipe. Yeah,

Akilah Hughes ([00:15:15](#)):

Swipe, swipe.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:15:16](#)):

Yeah. Swipe, swipe, swipe. I'm swiping in bed. I mean, how many people can say that the user behavior has shifted because of these algorithms and the way that these mostly men are designing these platforms? Because if women were at the table, they wouldn't be like, Look, let's just make sure that we're attention grabbing people to the point of exhaustion that they're waking up at three in the morning and their first go to is to go and swipe. They're sitting on the toilet. Exactly. And let's be real. There's people that are doing that and they're swiping and it's like, it's this, it's neat white culture. It's right. <laugh>, I have a few extra minutes. Let me minutes, let me

Akilah Hughes ([00:15:56](#)):

Swipe. My phone doesn't not go in the bathroom. <laugh>. Yeah.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:16:00](#)):

You know what I'm talking about. But you know, have to think about it though. At the end of the day, what is this culture serving? If we're, and I love when you talked about at what point are women or people who are humans who are thinking outside of the box and looking at these, how they want to create technology for good. And again, when I was brushing up on my Wakanda universe experience something that stood out for me about the technological advancements that they created and how it was benevolent for society, how it was created with intention. And so can you imagine what kind of humans

Akilah Hughes ([00:16:49](#)):

On

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:16:50](#)):

The toilet,

Akilah Hughes ([00:16:50](#)):

Scrolling an Instagram, all of that feels so outside of that vision that we all loved about this movie, it's, I think when the first time I saw it, it was a Twitter premiere that they did. And what was so exciting was that, and not just that there were no phones, but that everything was taken care of. And I think that that's like what's missing in the sort of lack of empathy that we have, I think in tech culture these days, is that we don't seem to care about the fact that after work, sometimes people just wanna chill out and watch TV or they wanna watch something, but it doesn't have to be 50 things or that they have to cook dinner for their family and put kids to bed and becoming addicted to their phone is not <laugh>. Maybe the best thing for them. And so I'm glad you brought up Wakanda, obviously that's what the podcast is about in ways. But to your point, for a lot of people, Wakanda sort of symbolizes this place of refuge where everyone's needs are taken care of, where the technology is used to make everyone's lives easier. It's the reason why the big debate of the movie is why haven't they shared that technology? Why haven't they connected with their people throughout the diaspora? But just going back to that idea of a place of refuge, how does self care and community care play a role in your work today?

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:18:16](#)):

It's a huge, huge, huge priority. In fact, it's one of our cultural cornerstones as an organization. I mean, it was birthed through the opposite, this hustle culture that we were all involved in, especially being a nonprofit, especially being a startup, especially being when in our early years I worked like 24 7, I was in the hospital after every conference we did Legitimately Without Fail, I fainted on the plane to our first London conference and ended up with the traumatic brain injury and going through years of post-concussive syndrome. Literally that is exactly what happened to me. And in 2018 I was after my 100000th injury and finally getting the memo, Okay, I guess I have to put self care

Akilah Hughes ([00:19:11](#)):

First. Yeah. Oh, I'm overwork <laugh>, right? Yeah. You're buying overwork after a certain point. You can't work forever. You,

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:19:20](#)):

I think though that especially women, people of color, those that come from underrepresented backgrounds, we're not taught that self care is not at top of mind. It's hustle, hustle, get the bag. If you can get it, get seen. If you can get seen. Cuz only a small group of people are gonna be able to accomplish those things. There's no time for self care. Self care is a luxury. But for me now, the opposite is true. I don't work a full day ever anymore. That's, I do work sprints. It's like, let me get a couple of hours in then. I mean, I'm gonna take a nap, I'm gonna watch Netflix, I'm gonna go grocery shopping. I do not work nine to five. And I never or nine to, I never will. It's, that's why some people will get emails because

Akilah Hughes ([00:20:12](#)):

Yeah,

([00:20:14](#)):

All the thing is you're getting the work done in the time. And I think you made a really good point where that I think we all probably know in some part of our brain, but I don't think that we have these discussions very often. But I think especially black women are often raised in a scarcity mindset because that's been the reality of the generations that came before us. And the idea that opportunity is always just the one chance and that you've squandered something if you aren't up and on and hustling 24 7 and up at 3:00 AM and bed by midnight, but then back at the 3:00 AM and never resting. We don't have histories of heart disease and all kinds of strokes and things that are only impacted more and more negatively by stress. I think it's really admirable, especially as a leader in this space that you've prioritized yourself.

([00:21:12](#)):

And I think I left doing my podcast that was a daily grind in a pandemic and the race war and in <laugh> to a lot of people being like, Why would you leave? It's a hit. It's great. Your name's out there and my name didn't go anywhere, but I'm sleeping a lot better at night. My hair is not falling out. <laugh>. So I think that it's just really important to see someone who is, who's objectively crushing it. Right? <laugh> saying, I take naps sometimes. Shout out to the nap ministry if you see them on Instagram.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:21:44](#)):

Yes. I love them by the way. I love them.

Akilah Hughes ([00:21:47](#)):

Yes, <laugh>. Exactly. I think that this is the new wave and I'm just so glad to see you embracing it because being tired is actually part of being a human. And I think also when we think back to our most creative times in life, they're often, when we were children where we had lots of time and space <laugh> to think and to come up with things and to watch tv, movies, read books, whatever. Play things that are considered leisure. Yes, play, absolute play that opens your mind. Instead of the idea of staring at a blue light from your computer <laugh> all day long.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:22:28](#)):

A

Akilah Hughes ([00:22:28](#)):

Key that's gonna generate something.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:22:30](#)):

What part of my self care is true story. I have an annual path to Disneyland and I go be a kid. You are. And

Akilah Hughes ([00:22:38](#)):

I'm my

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:22:39](#)):

Language. Yes. I'm at Disneyland every week. I was supposed to go today and then I kind of shifted some things around. I'm

Akilah Hughes ([00:22:46](#)):

Sorry to

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:22:47](#)):

No, I mean literally I'm going to tech crunch, disrupt. So I'm just like, let me just get some other priorities straight. But as soon as I get back Sunday, next Sunday I'm booked. Okay. Disneyland is my form of self care. It's an opportunity for me to be a kid again, go hang out and be in the MCU universe, hang out at the Avengers campus. That's my playtime. And don't, sometimes I go have I work there Aquila, I'm like, Oh, let me go find Lamplight lounge, I'm gonna sit there with my computer, get a little bit of work in. You know what I mean? These are ways I think that we've forgotten as leaders and even as founders and as even in the tech space of building technology and solutions, how important it is to counter that with play, with sleep, with care, with communication and connection with others. Because what I've seen in the tech space is so many people are head down and not enough head up. So I think that that's truly an important

Akilah Hughes ([00:23:55](#)):

Yes, absolutely. I mean, I hate to go on a tangent, but I love talking to you. So I'm gonna just go on, but I love <laugh>. I love that you brought up Disneyland because I think I'm a millennial and there's constantly articles being written. Why are there Disney adults going to the park for kids, your ruining experience. And I'm like, have you ever wondered why people would go to Disneyland as an adult for one experience? Unmatched <laugh>, This is not spot but unmatched experience where the day is taken

care of in a way where you write, there's food options everywhere. I love that you know how to do everything. It's like they've created the seamless experience. But also this is an overworked generation. If you ask any parent of a millennial, my mom will tell you the first adjective she would use to describe me as busy <laugh>.

(00:24:46):

It seems like akes busy. Millennials are busy, they're hard working, they're tired. And we also have in a lot of ways fewer opportunities to get other things. But what people can tend to afford is a pass at a park where they need to go with their friends, enjoy food, enjoy shows, and get to participate in the suspension of disbelief that this is a special place outside of the world. And so I love that you talk about play, and I love that you, I love Disneyland personally. Cause I used to work at Disney World <laugh>, but I think it's just very cool to hear another adult that I admire say, Listen, when I need to stop thinking about work and actually be in the moment, what a great place to do it.

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:25:28):

<laugh>, shout out.

Akilah Hughes (00:25:30):

Sorry.

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:25:32):

So

(00:25:34):

I'm a Disney adult, but I think it goes back to also that sense, if you're not caring for yourself, how can you care for others? And when you're in a space of being leadership, leadership that is meaningful, that you're cultivating this sense of empathy, that you're creating community. I think what works really well too in the Wakanda culture of care is that they take care of each other. And I mean almost to the other side of the degree where they've kind of brought themselves into their own community. They've shielded themselves off from the rest of the world, and then they're working together to create bigger and better technology and better solutions that they have at their disposal. So it's sort of like, you know, have to care for yourself and then care for others to be able to create meaningful, even more meaningful technological.

Akilah Hughes (00:26:32):

Absolutely. Yeah. My family always says you can't pour from an empty cup. And I think that is incredibly true, especially in sort of startup spaces, tech spaces where you know, have to maintain your sense of spirit. And the team has to also feel that. So yeah, I'm so glad that you're taking care of yourself in that way. Glad that you got back to Black Panther. You should host this podcast. You're better at <laugh>. I, I'm like, I'll talk to you about Disney. Who cares about me? <laugh> fine. But one thing that I do think is really cool about Black Panther and one of the major debates in the film is sort that idea of whether Wakanda should share their technological advances with the world or shield themselves off. You were saying. So if you were the ruler of Wakanda, you become, I don't know, the great grandmother to the Black Panther. I don't really know exactly how <laugh> their royalty works out. But say you have citizens and council members pressuring you on both sides of the issue saying, Hey, we have this tech, we cultivated it, things are good here, let's not rock the boat. Let's just keep it as it is. And then also the

people making the really strong point that these people who look just like you are struggling across the world and you have the solution, where would you stand on that issue and why?

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:27:46](#)):

I love this question. I think it's sort of like, well first of all, I would love to ascend to any kind of Wakanda leadership. You know what I mean? Royalty,

Akilah Hughes ([00:27:56](#)):

<laugh>. Exactly. <laugh>.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:27:57](#)):

I wear crowns. It's part of my brand. So let's just say that Lisa May now is the ruler, and I get to make these kinds of decisions. I am here for that. I think there's an opportunity for incubation period to be totally necessary where you're with your team and in this case a civilization and you're gathering ideas. I mean, they didn't just stay there. They sent some of the best people to go out and get education to be outside in their real world or the other world and to come back with new knowledge. But then when you create, this is an interesting sort paradox here. When you create technology like this that is designed to contribute to humanity, but then you are sectioned off from the world focused on your own sense of humanity. And this is a great analogy too, by the way. So when you're thinking about humanity, are you so focused about your own humanity and wellbeing that everybody else outside of that doesn't exist and now gets to suffer the consequences of the rest of the world? Or if you have the opportunity to do great things on the planet that are contributing to the whole,

([00:29:23](#)):

That's at the end of the day, that's what we're asking. Yeah. I think the way that previous generations of leadership and Wakanda failed was thinking that we had to protect ourselves and not have an opportunity to really do something for the greater good. And at the end of the day, myself as a leader, I'm going to definitely appreciate that incubation period that was necessary to cultivate that technology. But once you have it at your disposal and it can actually contribute to the community at large, I would absolutely do that. Now, I would also take, I mean not gonna unleash all the things to the world, Oh, I got this and I

Akilah Hughes ([00:30:11](#)):

Got that.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:30:12](#)):

Everything I got, it's right. I could solve all the things. No, I think that there's a strategic way to unveil and unravel even because a lot of this is people also have to adopt to these new technologies. I think if it could be harmful if you also just came out, I don't wanna say guns a blazing, but technology, a blazing, You know what I mean? To come out

Akilah Hughes ([00:30:40](#)):

Absolutely.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:30:41](#)):

<laugh>. Yeah. Cause then people, then you fall into that category of fear where people are like, Oh my God, do they mean us harm? Yeah.

Akilah Hughes ([00:30:52](#)):

I think

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:30:53](#)):

When you're talking about ai, even the discussions of evolution, technological, and evolution are so real. But they're fear based, right? Aquila, when people are like, Oh my god, robots, ai, the advent of technological evolution is so mind boggling for the everyday person. And so I think that would also have to be taken into consideration. Yes, let's share with the world, but let's build a strategy that allows us to integrate in a way that <affirmative> humans could adapt and adopt.

Akilah Hughes ([00:31:31](#)):

That's right. I think that that's a great answer. That's a great answer. Cause yeah, I mean even as we were talking about all these other things, I think about solutions and it's like people have to believe that there's a problem for you for a solution to exist <laugh>, right? And so I think that there's obviously some technology that immediately creates a level of equality that doesn't exist in the world, especially if that technology is coming from a sovereign black nation that no one existed <laugh>.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:32:01](#)):

Now that alone itself already gives me pause. I'm like, Oh, a sovereign black nation is going to come save the planet in today's climate. That would be very after a Trump era. Oh my god.

Akilah Hughes ([00:32:15](#)):

Can you imagine <laugh>? Yes. The conspiracy theories are already being written up <laugh>, like people are mad. They're like, this can't be true. And I think even historically, technology when it was used for good has been stolen to be used for bad. And it sort has this almost mythical quality through history of like, well, once people got this, that's how they learned to oppress. And I think, like you said, that fear makes sense, especially in this climate <laugh> where no one trusts anyone, especially not the media. Suddenly there's a conspiracy theory that this black sovereign nation is doing something sinister, when in actuality they were just trying to help everybody get to an even, an even playing field. Yeah, it's a lot to consider. I don't have my own answer, but I'm glad that you were so diplomatic with yours because kill monger had some points. <laugh> <laugh> kill monger made some

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:33:09](#)):

Points. Well, but again, even then though, to say, you know, need to share it all with the world, I mean, I think that is true. And I also think that strategically and humanely and compassionately you to, I mean, you can't use force to create good and no scenario has that ever worked out? Even if it was like, okay, hey you definitely, you're sitting on this gold mine of information that while people are dying, I get that. And I wanna say, and the opportunity for this, the intended, the intended outcome is that you're saving the world. But if it's not done in a strategic way and in a way that everyone can really appreciate and understand, and this is the issue that we are having as we're talking about web three, as we're talking about metaverse, as we're talking about ai, vr, xr, again, these technological advances, the conspiracy theories are first to come out before the adoption. It's like, oh my God, how is this gonna harm me?

How is this gonna, I'm scared I don't understand <affirmative>. And so oftentimes this is what government technology solutions struggle with. I'm a commissioner for the city of Los Long Beach for technology and innovation. And this is something that I've actually seen in the rooms is that community members are afraid of their data privacy. They're afraid of their being targeted, which they are actually are being targeted. So yeah,

(00:34:57):

It's thinking about things from that holistic perspective, which again, let's have a woman at the table and to make these decisions because it isn't got two men fighting for what is right and well with the universe. Do I do this, do I not? And then it obviously a fight ensued in the real world, like a war ensued <affirmative> for this conversation. But there at no point was there this holistic lens where it was like, Okay, yes, let's do it.

Akilah Hughes (00:35:28):

Yeah. Can we give a little Right <laugh>?

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:35:29):

Yeah, let's the compromise here, there was no compromise.

Akilah Hughes (00:35:34):

<laugh>. Yeah, it was all or nothing. And thankfully in the end, I mean unfortunately someone had to die to be a compromise in the end, no longer had to be sat in front of that beautiful sunset for there to be like, Fine, we'll give you a school in Oakland. But I do think that you make a great point where, where are those discussions and all the point you just made when those fears are justified sometimes where we have so little agency as people these days be in a lot of ways because of tech, because we don't know where our data goes. And we know that we're being spied on and we know that we're getting ads targeted to us. And after a certain point you accept cookies and you're like, Screw it, <laugh>. If on the hook for somebody's murder one day because I accepted cookies, that's on me.

(00:36:20):

I think that there's level of just, I don't understand what most of this means. And I also just, there's only so much we can resist it because that it's becoming the world. It's just an interesting dichotomy that I think the tech space and you know, in particular are gonna end up bumping up against for forever. I think that it's almost a natural progression. The reason progress is so is that people can't adopt progress if it in any way interferes with what they believe is or what they know, all that they know <laugh>. If all they know is phone books, we can't have iPhones for 10 more years.

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:37:01):

<laugh>, you know, hit the nail on the head. People cannot adopt progress. I mean it's like, look at where we are. When we had Trump that who she shall not be named <laugh> when we had him in office, had office, right?

Akilah Hughes (00:37:19):

Yeah.

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:37:20):

<laugh> exactly that. Who shall not be named. But it's, and it's interesting though, science, a human experience experiment, where we saw this complete de-evolution of humanity and everything that we understood about connection, about family, about friendship, and our social behavior on social media, evol devolved where we were like, holy hell, We spent all of this time creating these platforms for connection and now we're using these same platforms to harm others. And when we saw the killing of George Floyd, and that turned it into a cesspool of racism and discrimination and what I mean, and bullying. And it was on a level that we hadn't seen in our lifetimes where it completely destroyed lives. And that's where this place of technology, this is where we have to understand that everything that we create has an opportunity to cause harm or good. It's the good versus evil conversation is very real. When you are building apps, when building technology and going back to the conversation of women or humans that think outside the box and think about humanity at the forefront, a human centered design approach to designing these products and platforms, they do have to deconstruct what already exists. The same thing with systemic systems. Technology is a reflection of how we are evolving or devolving in our humanity. We'll stop. So that to me is where we need to really think about our role in advancing technology moving forward.

Akilah Hughes (00:39:28):

Right. And I love this conversation about women in tech specifically because I think, I do believe that I believe what you're saying, and as a woman, I stand by the idea that women tend to focus on safety and security and making people feel welcome. I think that, and maybe that's cultural, maybe just part of a world where women are relegated to that role. But it's also, I think in many ways natural. Because in many societies before where we are now, women were the head of the household. They balanced the checkbook, they made sure people were fed, someone else would leave the house to get resources, but they were in control of that. And I think about specifically with fear of tech in my mind there, this are a lot of debates, but one that I think really keeps coming up is this idea of anonymity and the pluses and minuses to that.

(00:40:33):

And when I speak with women about it, they're like, Well, I do think people should be allowed to be anonymous online because you don't know if somebody's stalking you or if you wanna participate in a community, but you don't want your identity revealed and you don't want to be a target. It's really helpful. And a lot of times I'm talking to people who are on Reddit and they're in healthcare communities and they're like, I'm posting pictures of my body parts after surgery trying to see what's normal <laugh> in a group of people who are also committed to a safe space to do so. And if I had to identify myself, that would put a target on my back. When I speak to men about it, a lot of times, and this is obviously a generalization, so don't come for me in the comments but a lot of times they're not talking to me about safety.

(00:41:19):

They're talking to me about, Well, I don't think I should get in trouble if I have something to say. It shouldn't reflect on my work and don't wanna it. It's about a lack of accountability. And I think that just broadening it out into the world that we live in now, but still in that horrible afterglow I think that there's a real connection between what we're talking about with Wakanda. And we can bring things to the world that would be helpful. But even their ability to remain anonymous, some people would read it as sinister <laugh> or as there's not gonna be accountability for what they're doing versus if for them it's about their safety for the outer world, it's about them being held accountable. And so there are always these two sides to the coin of why we do anything in tech and why choices are made the way that they're made. To get back to the discussion, <laugh>, sorry, and I promise we're almost done, but this

has been so great and I really appreciate you giving me this much time. Oh, no problem at all. If you could <laugh>, Thank you.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:42:28](#)):

No, really quickly on that, to bring that point home that you were just talking about, that all goes back to that sense of safety. I think this is why we started to really implement data privacy guidelines looking at how facial recognition technology even in the Wakanda universe, there's like this holograms and then at what point are, is that safe for us? What are we breach? What are we giving up when we adopt use of this technology? And then the other thing is, how do we utilize this with our personal idea of what free speech is? Because right at the end of the day, especially when you're talking about these individuals that do kind of step over others to communicate and say, Well, I should have a right to talk the way that I want and I shouldn't have to engage in council culture and bear the repercussions or accept accountability for the way that I'm using this technology and the way that I'm engaging with others.

([00:43:39](#)):

But I think the opportunity here is to understand that just because we have this idea of free speech doesn't mean that you can use harmful speech. And I think that more of that kind of communication should come through and opportunity. Cuz I think it's when somebody went, goes AWOL trump on Twitter, and then he just gets banned. While that was what so many of us wanted, it also created a pathway for people to get angry about it. And so I think communicating guidelines of this is how this in technology is intended to be used. These, yes, we have community guidelines, nobody reads those. So it needs to be part of the

Akilah Hughes ([00:44:21](#)):

User

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:44:22](#)):

<laugh>. You know what I mean? But it needs to be part of the user experience at the end of the day, because I'm using this platform, I know that I'm meant to engage with others this way, or I know that this is a safe space for X and I think

Akilah Hughes ([00:44:37](#)):

Exactly, I know what's acceptable.

Lisa Mae Brunson ([00:44:39](#)):

I know what's this, I know what's acceptable. And so it's, I think that is something for future technologists to think about is how do we bring this impact and this ethos into the user experience of this product. And I don't think that that's enough of what we're doing right now. It creating an understanding that when I'm using this technology, when I'm using this platform, this is how I'm expected to conduct myself as another human with other humans. It's not common sense clearly anymore. Cause nobody, we saw the fallout of things happening on Facebook and Twitter and people calling each other names and all that stuff. Obviously we need to do more.

Akilah Hughes ([00:45:27](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Sorry, I did freeze, but I heard most of that. And I think you're right. And it also records. It's nice <laugh>. But yeah, I agree with that. And I like the idea about thinking about as creating reality,

reflecting it. And when I first started about this idea, cause it's something I actually think about a lot. I was on YouTube for years before I did anything else, and I adopted it as a college student was not trying to make money doing it. And I've had so many conversations with tech leaders about the opportunity to create reality. Because at first I was like, Oh yeah, well, you've put us in this space and that's a creation in its own way. But I think that they often think that these negative comments and these sort of horrible things that people can say and get away with saying is a reflection of reality. When in actuality, the days that I spend off of my phone are the days that I am the least attacked, the least belittled. People are polite in person. People tend to be polite because of physical threat and safety, <laugh>. You know what I mean? You wouldn't just go into a room of people you disagree with and start screaming slurs at them because of your own physical safety. And I think that to your point, future tech leaders have to understand that.

(00:47:03):

But all of that is actually incredibly natural. It's human policing behavior to be like, Okay, am I gonna get punched in the face <laugh>? Like what can I get away with saying and what should I keep to myself? And I think there's, there is no incentive to keep it to yourself with the internet. If anything, they're like, What's going on? Share what's on your mind. Talk all the time. Never think and at what are we doing that to The other point you made, I think, I guess we can talk about this for so long, but the idea that there is tech that can improve the world is so obvious and so evident. And yet there's also, I think a beautiful world, maybe my dream Wakanda is a place where we don't necessarily need it or we don't have to opt in. Where the beauty, the bounty of Wakanda, everyone has enough of Wakanda is possible without people necessarily having to upend their way of life.

(00:48:06):

It could just be like, Oh, we've seen abundance and we share it. But also if you know, don't wanna have to make another profile and write a bio about yourself and do all things, you can skip that part. You can still engage in the world without it. Well, we're coming to the end of our time and so I, I'll just have a few, We're coming to the end of our time, and so I just have a few more questions. And this is a little bit more personal to you, but what is your, to people who have big ideas or visions for how to change the world, make it a better place and potentially through tech, but they just don't know how to turn it into action and how are you able to do it?

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:48:50):

I love the conversation around cultivating leadership and execution through vision. I think a lot of people that not everybody is a visionary. Not everybody with an idea understands their vision. And I want you to take a moment to think about that because I think ideas are great, but unless you're executing on them, unless you're building around them, they're just, ideas doesn't make them good or bad. It literally, it's an idea and we all have them. And so the first thing I would say to people is, if you believe strongly enough in an idea that you have for it to become a vision means execution, means gathering people around you to build on that vision. And it took me a long time to really sit very comfortably and grounded in my idea of looking at myself as a visionary, because I always had big ideas growing up.

(00:50:00):

I'm like, I wanna do this, I'm gonna do that. And what's crazy being, I mean, I have a gift of all of a sudden I got a little team. I have no money, but I have a team of people who have centered around my vision because I'm the first person to act on it. I'm the first person to talk about it. I'm the first person to research and figure out how am I gonna bring this baby out into the world even. And none of the other things have, I have allowed them to be a barrier for me to execute on a vision. And I'm talking, I'll do it

when I have this time. I'll do it when I have enough funding. I'll do it when I'm retired. I'll do it when I get a team, I'll do it when I get a logo. All. That's why I think most people with ideas, most people that probably are the next moala or Einstein or you know what I mean?

(00:50:53):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, like these brilliant minds that are just untapped on the planet. It's not necessarily that they've not being seen, it's that they're not executing on their vision at all. They're just have an idea. They might tinker around with it on the weekends, but you have to show up and at all. And I will say this, the world is designed especially for people that are women people that are gender nonconforming, people that are underrepresented, people that are fall into the buy pack categories, people that are culturally different. The world is not set up for us or by us that should, but neither should that stop us from tapping into the space of being a real leader and a visionary. And the defining moment for me was when I kept going, <laugh> was when I was like, This sucks. I am, I've been bullied, I've been beaten down.

(00:52:03):

I've been had gossip against me. I've had doors slammed. I've been underfunded, like blatantly underfunded. I have <affirmative> had, You know what I mean? I've been through a gauntlet and if I told everybody to all the things they would like jaw dropping for me to get in the position that I'm in today, which is still me having to recommit myself to doing it goes back to change the world. You have to really be so committed because you will undoubtedly face failure. You will undoubtedly face criticism. You will undoubtedly be underfunded. That is how this world has been set up for us. But you create community, you do the work, you continue to make those small and big shifts in your life, and you make it happen, and you stay rooted in the commitment that you're gonna keep birthing this baby one day. You will find yourself on the other side.

Akilah Hughes (00:53:10):

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I love what you said about collaboration. I think that so often people have these great ideas and they're afraid to share them for a number of reasons. There's the, they're gonna take my idea, people <laugh>, and then there's, Well, it's not perfect yet, so I couldn't possibly start somewhere people, And I think that we have to rely on each other because it, it's gonna start with us. That's how it always has happened historically. Well, my final question, I'm such a fan. What can people expect next from Wonder Women Tech?

Lisa Mae Brunson (00:53:48):

The opportunity that the pandemic created for us in a sea of nightmares for all of us globally But the opportunity for me was it gave me an opportunity to sit back and think about impact. I faced such extreme burnout, Aquila, I was ready to give up the vision of one, a women's tech would've been gone. True story. Yeah. I had already prepared my goodbye speech to the, I'm just, I mean, I'm done. But I realized that there's no one doing the work that the way that we do it, that that's willing to, What we did was redesign the way that we partner with companies, brands. I got tired of being pigeonholed. We do conferences all over and we were doing a bunch of conferences a year, and I'm like, Nope, I am not an event planner. That is not what we're doing here. But I was like, But I wanna work meaningfully with companies.

(00:54:48):

If we're talking about diversifying the workforce, if we're talking about creating cultures of belonging inside of organizations where systemically it's not existing, then that means that we have to do more

than just like, Hey, once a year, have you guys at our conference, Okay, put up a booth, get some resumes, let's go. No. Right. We're not doing that anymore. And so I basically have come back to companies like Amazon, Alexa, We're doing some cool stuff together for a year where we're like, We're gonna work together for a year, and in that space, we're gonna have some brand engagement. We're gonna talk, we're gonna have meaningful discussions, we're gonna have look at impact and what we're doing <affirmative> together, and we're gonna create storytelling, and we're gonna talk about why you care about people that look like me and what you're gonna do about making sure that when I am in your spaces, that I'm gonna feel like I belong, that I am included in the development of the whole.

(00:55:48):

And so, mm-hmm. <affirmative> one, women tech, we've got a couple of conferences. We decided we're stick to an e e A conference abroad, and we're going to London next year and in Dubai in 20 24, 4 in Africa in 2025. And then we have our home base here in Long Beach, California. And those are the culmination of the work that we do all year. We will have these cultural celebrations. We've decided to rebrand kind of what we do into these cultural celebrations where we can get into the diaspora, where we can talk about Latin culture and embrace our inner superhero, what kind of planet, You know what I mean? Mm-hmm. <affirmative> have this immersive, Yeah, these immersive experiences. That's another thing we decided we were gonna focus on is as we're talking about technology that can impact for good. Let's bring in AI companies, VR companies, but people that are committed to doing great things on the planet.

(00:56:47):

Yes, there's the fun factor, but what are the opportunities for the advancement of humanity because your technology exists? Or can you educate us so that we can become early adopters or adopters at all for what's coming up ahead and in the met of our space, are we being conscious and ethical in creating safe spaces in these hybrid and virtual communities? And so that's the work that Wonder Women Tech is up to next. It's redesigned so much Aquila, and I'm super, And the other thing is our hiring humans platform, we decided that we were gonna double down on our workforce development programs and really tap into our hiring humans brand where we want to do even more work with regard to increasing representation inside of community and companies and things of that nature, and providing access to education and mentorship. So thinking about the Wakanda sort of leadership and taking some points out of that, It is about the whole, this idea that you have to develop the health of the community that you serve or that you're part of and that you exist within.

(00:58:06):

And that's really like, those are really the principles that we embody. And this is when I was first approached for this project, I loved the concept, but I will tell you as I delved into one, Freshening Up my what kind skills and research, right? Let's be real <affirmative>. One thing you'll always learn about me is I'm super authentic. That's part of my leadership style. Transparency is everything. I'm authentic. So I did have to brush up on it. I've seen the movie a couple of times, but to actually read, there's something about going on to Wikipedia and going on the internet and being like, Okay, let me look at the storylines here. And I was like, Holy hell. I don't know if we can discuss <laugh>, but holy hell, what Women Tech has so many of the principles that Wakanda is built on, and the idea of this Wakanda forever, but for that kind of statement to exist, it centers around pride.

(00:59:07):

And knowing that you've created something that works as a system, when you talk about new paradigm and dismantling systemic systems that have not worked for any of us, you have to really have this idea that you're targeting all parts of the whole and innovating those spaces. And that's next for one of Ram

Tech, is that we are operating from that lens. Let's look at all the things that are broken. Let's create a community around people. We're not in our silo anymore. There's people that can go out and cover the mentorship piece, the leadership piece, the D E I B P, You know what I mean? Let's come together in this community of Wonder Women Tech, Wakanda, universe, and build something truly meaningful and truly impactful.

Akilah Hughes ([01:00:01](#)):

That is a perfect note to end on. Lisa May Brunton. Thank you so, so much. Your information will be in the show notes, so for those listening check out what Wonder Women Tech is up to. And I really can't wait to see what you all are doing. And truth is I'm, I'm so glad that we were able to speak. This has been just so illuminating and it's heartening to see that we're being well represented in the tech space. So thank you, Waka forever, one woman Tech forever, <laugh>,

Lisa Mae Brunson ([01:00:29](#)):

I love that. Yes, yes, yes. Thank you so much, Tequila. I really enjoyed connecting with you today.