



## Rants and Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi

Love Radically (with Darnell Moore) - Episode 15

Released: September 18, 2018

My peoples, welcome to Rant and Randomness. I am Luvvie Ajayi, your side-eye sorceress and whacky wordsmith, and this is my podcast where I'm talking about the things I'm loving, things I'm side-eyeing, and having great conversations with amazing people. I'm here at the Chicago Recording Company, bringing you the radio voice. You know what I mean? It's always.

On this episode, my feel-good is about how I'm doing a massive purge of my life, ranting about why people need to respect Serena Williams, and spotlighting Black girls' rock. My guest is the incredible host, author, just dope person, [Darnell L. Moore](#).

Let's jump into it.

### Feel Good

[00:00:43]

This week, I'm feeling good about purging my closet, my office, my house. What happened is, I ended up looking at my office, just looking around everywhere, there's junk everywhere.

There's clutter everywhere. Now, here's the thing, because I'm an influencer and because I'm a writer, all that stuff, I get a lot of free things sent to me, which I love. I love free stuff, love it. What happens is, it all piles up because I'm not using all of it, and I look up months later and realize there's entire rooms in my house that is full of junk and stuff. Useful stuff, mind you, but I can't use it because I'm only one person. This Sunday, I decided to just spend the entire day, I'm talking 12 hours, creating piles of what I'm donating, what is no longer good that I need to throw out, what I need to give away to friends and family, what I need to post on eBay or whatever. I literally dedicated the entire day to this pursuit. At the end of the day, I'm pretty sure I ended up giving away or getting rid of probably 100 pounds worth of stuff. I'm talking two lamps, blenders, shoes, makeup, all types of stuff. It was very productive, and I was Insta-Storying it. If you all aren't following me on Instagram, you should. I'm [@luvvie](#), because I wanted to see if anybody else was purging and seemed that, that day was a purging day for us, like T-shirts.

I have probably 50 graphic T-shirts. No, probably more than that. I gave away about 20 so far. Then there's a nonprofit in Chicago that I'm going to donate a lot of my clothes to called [Project Style](#), and they use fashion to empower young girls to basically live their best lives. My whole thing is it is always good to purge because it creates space. The things that you don't need, that aren't serving you, let them go and give it to somebody else who can. I haven't found old phones and I found out that I can

donate those to domestic shelters because they'll give them to women who are trying to escape abusive situations. For everything, there's somebody else who can use it when it's just collecting dust. That purge felt good. I called it phase one because I still have things I can let go of, so I'm going to keep doing that. So far, the fact that I got rid of so much stuff and I have more space, it makes me feel amazing. I encourage you to purge.

## Rant

[00:03:01]

My rant this week is about the continued disrespect of Serena Williams.

Serena Williams is one of the greatest athletes of all time. She's also one of the most disrespected athletes of all time. She's been playing tennis for over 20 years as a professional, and she's proven herself over and over and over again about why she deserves to be called one of the greatest athletes of all time. Nike now has a building named after her because they understand she actually is the greatest of all time. Now, what comes with this, because Serena is a Black woman is that people do not want to give her the credit that she deserves and people will constantly try to act like she did not earn her way to where she is. Like it's the intersection of racism and sexism what she's enduring in tennis and just in general, how she's talked about in media, how tennis association deals with her. One of those things is the fact that Serena is actually one of the most drug tested athletes. According to Deadspin, she's been tested for performance enhancing drugs more than twice as often as other top American women players.

As in, they can show up at her house at any given day to be like, "Hey, we're going to test you in case you're taking all these drugs that will enhance your performance." Now, in her 23-year career, professional career, she's never tested positive for performance enhancing drugs, but she's also the most tested because I feel like they don't really believe that she can be that good without the help of chemical substances. They're like, "We're going to catch you one of these days." You all still ain't caught her because she's not drugging. This is just pure hard work. This is athleticism. This is work ethic. You all going to give Serena some time. Then what happened was the US Open. Who knew the US Open could be controversial? I'm just thinking tennis. Okay, two athletes. Serena Williams playing against Naomi Osaka, who's a 20-year-old who's half Haitian, half Japanese, and she basically ended up being disrespected, because the umpire penalizes her with a game point because Serena was basically standing up for herself.

The whole event makes me upset because it is the perfect capture of one, what it's like to be a Black woman who's amazing at the work that you do, because people are going to constantly try to discredit you. People are going to constantly get mad because you advocate for yourself, because they will call you angry and aggressive. They will say that you are not being a team player. When she said to the umpire, "You owe me an apology." It was like she was standing for every Black woman who's been in that position, who anytime she wants to just speak up for herself, she's told to sit down. [A cartoon came out in the Herald Sun](#), the Australian Herald Sun from a cartoonist called Mark Knight that showed Serena. He drew Serena basically as a brute who's throwing a tantrum, breaking her racket with a pacifier next to her and drew Naomi Osaka as a blonde girl to further other Serena because they

were like, "You know what? We want to point out the fact that this really Black girl is throwing a tantrum on the field."

Here's the thing in tennis and sports in general, men throw tantrums all the time. Have you ever seen [John McEnroe footage](#)? The dude will almost tackle the umpire. For Serena to be the one that's singled out, they fined her \$17,000 for this, it's maddening. To get this type of disrespect constantly, for me, it's just racist, it's despicable. I'm appalled by it, and she always deals with it with so much grace. After being constantly tested for drugs, after having your opponents write chapters and memoirs blaming you for their losses, after the media wants to call you all the names, but a child of God, I would want to just drop, kick everybody in the face, but Serena's always like, "I'm just going to keep playing my sport." She doesn't deserve any of the disrespect that she gets. She has worked so hard. I mean, I don't know what else people want from this woman. She's proven time and time again that she's earned every single win that she's gotten on that field.

That even when they're trying to tell her, you can't wear that outfit because they think it's disrespectful to other people, which how is me wearing a Black cat suit, disrespectful to the sport? Okay. No matter what they throw at her, Serena always comes up on top. I find it important that we continue to speak up for her because how much fighting can she do for herself in these places? We have to constantly affirm her. We need to publicly support her. Billie Jean King, who's her idol said on Twitter, "When a woman is emotional, she's hysterical and she's penalized for it. When a man does the same, he's outspoken and there are no repercussions. Thank you, Serena Williams, for calling out this double standard." More voices are needed to do the same. Even Andrew Roddick who retired from tennis said on Twitter, "I've regrettably said worse, and I've never gotten a game penalty." Serena, I just want, you probably don't listen to Rants and Randomness, but in case you do, I just want to let you know that they come at you because they see your power, but they cannot stop it, and we see you. We stand with you and things get rough, but you've already clinched your spot as a GOAT, greatest of all time.

Even if Serena never plays another tennis game, which of course you will, because that's what she does and the game needs her. Even if she never plays it, she's already a hall of famer in tennis. She never has to do... The racket never has to be picked up again, but I'm just heartened and inspired by how much she handles this, how well she handles this, the grace under constant and fire, how people try to come for her body and her skills and her human, her character, and she always stands up tall. Now, she has a daughter, so she's like, "Look, I'm definitely unbothered about you all because I have a whole human to raise." She's married and she seems happy, but on this court, she still deserves way better treatment. I'm hoping that one day we get to the point where Black women do not constantly have to not just be good at our jobs, but then we also have to babysit people's egos because they feel bad when they lose to us. Serena's going to always win, even when she doesn't win on the court.

## Randomness Spotlight

[00:09:59]

My spotlight this week is [Black Girls Rock](#). Black Girls Rock was created by Beverly Bond in 2006 to celebrate Black women who are trailblazers, changemakers, or dynamos in their respective fields. It really shows the importance of creating spaces to celebrate Black women, because there are so many

spaces that won't and don't and so many spaces that tell us that we don't deserve to be celebrated, which is why Black Girls Rock is really important. The mission of the actual organization is to change the world by empowering Black girls to lead, innovate and serve, and Black Girls Rock Inc is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has been committed to enrich and girls through leadership, education, positive identity development. I've actually spoken at the Black Girls Lead conference, which Beverly throws every year in summer, where she brings about 70 young girls for three days to talk to boss women, women who are doing amazing things. It's such a good space for these girls to see what's possible because a lot of us don't understand what's possible unless there's an example of it in front of us.

Black Girls Rock is also a multifaceted movement dedicated to shift in the cultural paradigms of media music that often negatively impact women and girls. The award show happens once a year, where Black Girls Rock honors Black women who are just doing dope stuff, and it just happened Black Girls Rock 2018 just aired. Naomi Campbell won the Black Girl Magic award, Janet Jackson won the Rockstar award, Judith Jamison won the Living Legend award, Lena Waithe was a shot caller of the year, Mary J Blige was a star power awardee, and my girl Tarana Burke was community change agent. It's two hours of us celebrating those of us who are breaking through and able to live the lives we want to live and do amazing work. If you haven't watched the show, BET has been re-airing it, so catch one of those.

I'm especially proud of Tarana Burke, who is the woman behind the Me-Too movement. I've known Tarana for probably six years and seen her on that stage, dressed in all gold, looking like a trophy herself. I was like, "You better come on." Black Girls Rock is important. It's not just an affirmation, even though that affirmation, we need to say it over and over again, Black girls rock because in the world that doesn't want to affirm our value, that can't be taken for granted, but just having that hour or two hours, which by the way, was hosted by Queen Latifa this year, to pause, to really applaud and give people their roses while they're here, you cannot underestimate it. It's just good work being done. Beverly actually just came out with a book, was that this year? This year that I contributed to called [Black Girls Rock](#) that has chapters written by different women.

I'm talking Ava DuVernay wrote a chapter, there's Jessica O. Matthews who runs Uncharted Play wrote a chapter, and it's this gorgeous coffee table book that allows you to see what people who are visible and doing this great work are up to in their views on life. Lupita Nyong'o wrote a chapter. It's dope. You all pick it up. That's on Amazon, Barnes and Nobles, it's anywhere where books are being sold, but basically, it's a movement. It's the continued love and celebration and affirmation of Black womanhood, Black girlhood in this time where it's so necessary. Showing love to Black Girls Rock, all the things, the show, the nonprofit, the conference, the book, you all do that too. Follow them on social media, @BLACKGIRLSROCK, I think on all social platforms and let's keep supporting each other and let's keep being loudly vocal about how dope we are. One day all of us will start really believing that we do rock.

## Interview with Darnell Moore

[00:14:25]

Luvvie: Rants and randomness fan, I'm so excited to welcome author activists and just dope person, my friend, Darnell Moore to the show. Darnell, welcome.

Darnell: Thank you. I'm glad to be on.

Luvvie: Let me give people your bio, so they understand the epicness that's on this side. Darnell is head of strategy and programs for US for Breakthrough TV. He is former editor-at-large at CASSIUS, Urban One, a communist that logotv.com, newnext.com, and he contributed to Mic, where he hosted their widely viewed digital series, The Movement, which is so good, you all. You all should check it out. He writes regularly for Ebony, Advocate, VICE Guardian. He was one of the original Black Lives Matter organizers organizing bus trips from New York to Ferguson after the murder of Michael Brown. Moore is a writer in residence at the Center of African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice at Columbia University. He's taught at NYU, Rutgers, Fordham. Lord Darnell, Jesus, and he was trained at Princeton Theological Seminary. His first book, No Ashes in the Fire came out in May 2018. You all welcome Darnell, okay?

Darnell: Hey. Hey, you all. That bio is... I can't stand bios.

Luvvie: You know what? I hate whenever people read my bio too because I'm always like, "This is the longest thing ever."

Darnell: It's hard, but mean, I feel so... I don't know. Bios are still... I don't know.

Luvvie: It's because you've done so much, so sometimes seeing it reflected back to you kind of makes you blush a little bit.

Darnell: Blush and then you know how it is. What I've done now, rather than people... People say like, "What do you do?" I now say, "Do you want me to tell you what I love?" That really saves a different type of conversation.

Luvvie: I like that. When people ask you what do you love, what do you say?

Darnell: I say, I love using whatever skills, talent, access points I have to spark transformation within our communities and to do stuff for the love of Black people in whatever ways I can. That's typically how I respond. Whether that's writing, whether that's teaching, whether that's organizing with communities, whether it's using media to do my work, all of it is grounded in the same goal, and that's to make sure that our folk are good and that they're represented and that we can transform our world.

Luvvie: I love that because that does change the conversation.

Darnell: You see how it changes? When people typically, what they do is when they ask you what do you do, they want to know how you make money.

Luvvie: Yes, yes.

Darnell: Like what's your job, what are you doing that pays your bills? I'm like, "Well, that's not the important part. What's important is what I do is work that feeds my spirit and my stomach, and that's the gift."

Luvvie: Come on. Listen, and the whole, what do you do thing, it's interesting because many of us do so many things, so it becomes hard. The, what do you love kind of shows your spirit and shows your heart and why you do what you actually do.

Darnell: Exactly.

Luvvie: I love it. I usually start by asking when you were little Darnell, what did you want to be when you are grown up, so when you were growing up?

Darnell: Oh my gosh. Let me just paint a picture for you all. Little Darnell was dressed up, I call it church clothes. I was a little thin, scrawny, little boy, big glasses, dress pants that were like floods and little white socks and church shoes and trench coat. The funniest thing I used to wear suits and vests, I wanted to be a preacher and a doctor. Those are the two things I wanted to do. I loved church. I used to love seeing the Black folk at Holiness Pentecostal church I went to, flip it out and shout and catch the Holy Ghost on the pew. I used to...

I did that. I used to play church with my sisters and my cousin, I was the pastor and I used to play school where I would be the teacher. That's what I wanted, and a doctor. It's funny, all of those things that the core of it is all about helping, they're helping professors. In so many ways, I've sort of done that. I graduated from seminary, so I've done the preacherly thing, and I got a degree in clinical counseling, so I'd done this sort of helping therapist thing. I see a resonance of all of those things on my work now. I get to preach, but it's just a different message in a different pulpit.

Luvvie: You do be preaching. Darnell is writing. He'd be over here dropping sermons and, in his book,, preaching. When you wanted to be a preacher growing up, how does that work for somebody who's eight or 10 or 12, the ages where children are really kind of carefree? Wanting to be a preacher so young, that means you are very focused on this idea that your purpose was to help people.

Darnell: You know what's funny, I was a young boy. I really was in the... This sounds so corny and a little weird, but I used to take the Bible with me. I used to sneak the Bible into my bathroom and read the Bible, reading those books too like Numbers and Ecclesiastes that don't really got a lot to say. I was reading those scriptures very young and I would talk to God just like I'm talking to you, and this is before I was formally, formally introduced to the church. I've always had this affinity for spirit and affinity for connection. I think a part of it had to do with so much hell was kind of going on in my home at the time, a lot of intimate partner violence.

I think what happens when shit is happening in your life, particularly as kids, when hell is breaking loose, you really don't have a lot of people to call them for help, it's when spirit is more pronounced, or at least you feel like you have this access to something bigger than your present circumstances that can help you, that can help us. I would pray for A's, all A's on my report card, and I also pray for God to take my dad out of my house because he was harming my mother. I swear to you, I would say it just like that. "God,

can you please help me to get all A's on my report card when I'm in Mrs. Troops's class and can you get my dad out of my house?"

Surprisingly enough, I got all A's on my report and I was like, "God is real." My dad, eventually the abuse would stop because at some point, he was incarcerated actually, and then eventually moved out. For young people, for young people, I think it's important to remember that young people have spiritual lives, young people have curiosities that we dream, that young kids are actually thinking deeply about the world and their circumstances sometimes. I was still playing on my big wheel. I was still doing other things that kids do, but I saw the world. I saw what's going on, and I think sometimes we forget that kids can see or perceive what's happening in the world, even if we don't think they can.

Luvvie: Kids have the ability to be able to kind of shield themselves from what's happening in the world.

Darnell: Yes.

Luvvie: As you tell these stories, all of this is actually in [No Ashes in the Fire](#), your book that just came out in May. I told you that I read that book in a week. Your book was so vulnerable. It was so open. It was introspective. It was just... You could see your heart in the words. One of the things about your book that stood out is when you were talking about growing up in your household and your father being abusive. I want you to kind of talk about how you were able to write that. How were you able to take that and put it on paper?

Darnell: Wow. It was hard, hard work. I went and rented a place in Atlanta for about three months and I went down to write at least the first part of the book by myself. I was in this house by myself and I looked a mess, Luvvie. Oh my gosh, I remember calling some friends on FaceTime, they were like, "Why you look like that?" I was like, "Because I'm sitting here by myself, revisiting memories." You're not just writing, putting memories on a page, you're actually traveling back to the feeling, to the emotions, right? You're welcoming those things back, so think about moments, I'd seen, for example, where I'm recalling a moment of either intimacy. I talk about moments of beauty and intimacy with my father and I feel just fuzziness that comes to my belly from that, and I also talk about moments where I see him acting wild, wild and out.

To think about those things always brings back recurrent feelings, and it was really hard, right? I was telling, I laugh now. I was telling my publisher, "I say it all the time when I'm on book talk, publishers for Black writers who are particularly interested in telling stories that are complex, meaning they may have hope. They may be hopeful. They may make you laugh. Sometimes they may make you cry, but for the most part, when you're Black, writing words within an anti-Black world, within a world if you're queer, that's anti-queer and trans. Sometimes you're going to be writing about trauma, traumatic shit, and I'm like, "Publishers need to be in our contracts saying, I'm going to make sure that you just don't get this advanced, but we're going to make sure you've got a therapist to and will pay for it.

Luvvie: Yes.

Darnell: I think that's necessary. All Black writers, they need to get a therapist.

Luvvie: Yes, yes. I fully agree because in reading your book, and one of the gifts that you have with words is it transforms you, it takes you into the moment that you're describing. As you're describing the moments of beauty, I can almost feel you smiling through these words. Then when you're describing the moments of trauma, I literally sometimes have to put the book down to be like, "Okay, let me keep on going." As a writer, how do you capture that? That's really hard. That's really, really, really, really, really hard because you're putting your heart on paper.

Darnell: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's really what it was. I kept thinking, if I'm going to write this book... [inaudible 00:24:47] did say there's one point he's interviewed. I can't remember what publication, and he said, "What advice would you give to somebody writing a memoir? He said to not fucking lie.

Luvvie: That's it.

Darnell: I was like, "Damn. If I'm a rapist, I got to tell the truth." The truth, it means burring one's heart on a page. I wanted people to really get a sense of what it feels like within the life world of, not only my life, but I wrote about my parents were young when I was born, 15 and 16. I wanted readers to get a sense of what it might feel like to be a young parent, you know what I'm saying? I'm like, "I can barely take care of myself now." I'm old. I got gray in my bed. I make relatively good money. You know what I'm saying? I got resources and access to people.

If I need help, if some cop do some dumb shit to me, I can call somebody up and get legal representation, but my parents were 15 and 16, you know what I mean? I barely be cooking good dinners for myself now. I don't really know where my food will come from. I'm like, "How they do that every day? How did they feed me? How did they make provisions?" I wanted to really bring to the floor the life, what a Black people who grew up in space of like I did, like Camden, New Jersey. Let me holler and represent Camden, New Jersey real quick.

Luvvie: Hey, now.

Darnell: That's home. I'm like, "This is a story about us." This is a story about my city and my family. Young people who may or may not have endured and strived and thrived through some things like I did. It's a story about survival. It's a story about love and hope, and that took a lot out of me. I will say, on this side of the... The book is done, I'm a different person because of it. I feel so much more whole, literally. My father passed while I was writing a book, the writing of the book became cathartic. It was healing for me, and I actually feel so much closer to him, even as he transcended into the spirit than I did before I wrote the book, so it helped.

Luvvie: Yeah. This book, I feel like this love... This book is a love letter to your life this far.



Darnell: Come one. You all, Luvvie said it's a love letter to my... I'm going to make sure that's on the paperback. That book will get a paperback.

Luvvie: This book is a love letter. It's like you can see you forgiving yourself to your past mistakes and forgiving your parents and just becoming the person that you are now. Why was now the time to write it, because I'm sure you've thought about doing it before, why were you finally ready?

Darnell: I don't know if we ever are really ready, you know what I'm saying? The book that is here is not the book I wanted to write. I didn't really want to write a memoir. I felt like that felt... It felt narcissistic and grandiose. I induce it, what I'm I going to write about, because we have this idea that memoirs are supposed to be these grand gestures of success, are one about overcomers who can talk... A certain type of person that's supposed to write a memoir, you're supposed to be older. You supposed to have done some shit. This is what I thought, but that's a misreading of the genre. A memoir is not autobiography. It's not like I'm telling the sort of chronological story from my birth until now, memoir it's personal writing.

It's life writing that if you can do it well, somehow draw out themes that can connect to the larger world and community. I wrote it now because I was working on a book that was more cultural criticism, you know what I mean? It was more head and less heart, and as people would read the drafts, they were like, "You know what's sticking out to us, your stories. We would love to hear more of your stories." What it made me think about, which is why I applaud you for your work. So much of what theory attempts to do is sort of blocked because of language, who gets to have access to what language we talked to the choir, and what I wanted to do was to use stories without ever having to use words like intersectionality, without ever having using word, I didn't have to say like Black feminism or words that we know we get it, right?

Luvvie: Right.

Darnell: I could just use stories. I could talk about my mom. All you have to know that my mom had me at 16. She had to drop out, she was forced to drop out of school. She was forced in so many ways to get government assistance. She had to raise four kids making a minimum wage that was something \$3.75 an hour picking boxes off the back of... That without me ever saying intersectionality, by the time you read her story, you'll get it.

Luvvie: Yup.

Darnell: That's what intersectionality is about. It was specifically written with her in mind, right? That's why I wrote the book now. Secondly, the last thing I say is I really am, with as much as we have, like representation. We say we need more representation of Black, queer and trans and gender nonconforming voices. We get bits of it here and there. We have Moonlight, we have [inaudible 00:29:56], which I love them both. We have the work of playwrights like Donja R. Love. We have a bunch of writers who are writing Charlene Carruthers. Shout out, Charlene.

Luvvie: Love me some Charlene.

Darnell: Just came out with [Unapologetic, A Black Feminist, Queer Mandate for Radical Movements](#). These books, we have Patrice Cullors' books. We have a lot of stuff, but it's still not enough. On a grand scale within an industry that is largely, a publishing industry that is largely white, that is largely organized around the needs of white male writers, which means that if you're Black man, if you're a Black woman too, if you're Black, queer and trans and women and still not writing within sort of these range of respectability, using language you try to write for your people, it's even harder. We know it because this is our tribe.

Luvvie: Right.

Darnell: We know these names, but in the large scale, we still need more. I was writing against that. I was writing the state of Black, the narrative of Black- one, queer, trans-gender, nonconforming people- two, especially those who are economically disenfranchised, especially those who are not always imagined as alive and respected in our freedom dreams, our stories deserve to be told too.

Luvvie: Absolutely. One thing I was saying when I actually, so I hosted Darnell's book talk in Chicago. I think your book is going to give a young, queer Black boy the language to speak about who he is. That is what we're talking about when we're talking about not preaching to the choir, because we can talk to each other. Those of us who have platforms and voices every day, but it's how do the people who don't have this get to speak? Part of what you did in this book is to give that language, and there's one of my favorite parts of this is when you told your mom that you were gay and you said she gave you the freedom.

Darnell: Yeah.

Luvvie: I want you to talk about that.

Darnell: Yeah, she gave me the freedom. It's still funny, I did an event. Yesterday was Charlene Carruthers' and I read from... We talked about you, we looked at your name and then I read that part of the book because I lived 28 years walking with fear that my family who I knew who never demonstrated anything, but love from me would somehow reject me if I were to, and I don't now say coming out, I say inviting in.

Luvvie: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Darnell: I ain't going to come out of shit I'm in. Straight people don't want to come out. You all come out of this shit. I invite you in. It's an act of hospitality, an act of grace to be invited to the deepest parts of my life. When I went to her, I was at work. I called her to my job. I sent her a text message actually. It was the old school phones, the flip phones. I was like, "Damn." As I was watching the line go. I was like, "I hope it don't go, bro." It did, and she got it. She responded right away. I think she was waiting. She had been waiting for me to talk to her and she came to my office and she's like, "What's wrong?" I was

like, "Umm" She's like, "What's wrong?" I was like, "You know..." She asked me if I was fixed. She asked me if I had cancer, if I had AIDs, I said, no. I just said, "I have a boyfriend." She was like, "I knew that already."

Luvvie: Because mamas be knowing.

Darnell: What? She was like, "I was just waiting for you to say something." She was like, "Your sisters know too by the way. We've been talking about this for years."

Luvvie: You don't know who they know they do.

Darnell: You don't know who they know they do, but she said, "You're my son and I love you." She also said, "I want you to know that anyone that cannot love you don't deserve to be in your life." She said, "That means people, your friends and the church." I swear to you, that moment was pivotal for me. I literally had this thought, I'm about to go get a shirt that'd be like, "I'm gay as hell and my momma loves me, so I don't give a fuck what you think." Like, I was going to get the shirt. Then I was like, "Damn." What it demonstrated was the power of affirmation and acceptance. I cannot say this enough, especially to parents.

That moment when a mom or dad or sister or brother or whoever family that you were created with look you in the face and said, I see you and I love you can mean a difference between someone living or not, because that was a moment of my life when I was really, really, really, really trying to take myself out of here. Her saying that to me gave me the additional push that I needed to literally live, and I'm just so grateful for her. The next day, my mom still to this day does not drive because she's old school from the city. She makes everybody else drive her ass around though, but she got on the train. She deserved it, traveled two hours away by public transportation to come here for me to give a keynote in my new work and to meet my partner, who was... She met him and she ain't speak for the first day. She was like, "Hey."

Luvvie: Because they got be funny acting at first for everybody.

Darnell: Exactly-

Luvvie: That's they baby-

Darnell: She gave very much the side eye. I gave was the [inaudible 00:35:16]. She was not flipped, but it was an act of love. She helped me to live and I stayed at everywhere I go.

Luvvie: Listen that. Oh my goodness, we just do not understand the power of our words to other people in the moments that they might need it the most, and they don't even realize it.

Darnell: The power of our silence is too, because I told her the reason why I say inviting in, because what it does, it takes the onus off of the one person who is expected to name oneself or disclose oneself and invitation, that invitation is for all of it. As a parent, I told

her you could have always said something to me. She was like, "I didn't know how you'd respond." I'm like, "Imagine if you would have said this to me, six years ago, 12 years ago, after the boys tried to jump me and tried to light me on fire. Imagine if you would have said you are my son. I know these kids out here picking on you because of what they think, but I want you to look in the mirror and love yourself, love every part of yourself." You know how that could have shifted the landscape of my life. This is why I'm with young people, this is what I really do my work for them, because I'm like, I want them, like you said, I want some young person to read that book or they're here, I don't care if somebody's work to watch something, to get access to something, so they could feed themselves and know that they are worthy of love and life.

Luvvie: Yeah, yeah. That is so real. Wow. Imagine if she had said that six years ago. Yeah. We always think we have more time.

Darnell: Yeah.

Luvvie: We always think we have more time.

Darnell: I mean, a young kid and I'm just, damn it. I'm hating myself for not being able to remember his name, but a young boy over the last two weeks, I think nine years old was picked on at school and committed suicide.

Luvvie: Yes, I heard about that. I heard about that. Let me see if I can find it.

Darnell: You know what I mean? Nine, nine.

Luvvie: Honestly, we think we're further along than we really are. We assume because we might have queer friends, openly gay friends, trans friends, we're like, "Oh, the world is accepting it." No, the world is still full of trash people who will other, other people for not living the lives they live. It's always a moment of shock for me to hear stories about the little boy who killed himself because he was being bullied for being gay. His name, I just pulled up his name, Jamel Myles.

Darnell: Yeah, say his name. That's right.

Luvvie: Nobody deserves that.

Darnell: It haunts me. From what I can tell, his parents loved him, but I was telling people, I don't care. We say Black girls rock and Black girls are magic or Black boy magic or Black people magic, and I'm like, "I don't care how magical we are. I don't care how strong we are. Sometimes you don't have enough magic within oneself and you have in possession enough strength to move against constant stream of hatred." You understand what I'm saying? Black trans woman are goddesses. It's because of what we say. They're also being killed at unprecedented numbers. I think I lost count, but it was... Just this year, three folks just week in the same city, three trans woman. It is at this idea that Black people have to always be so strong and that Black girls always have to be so magic. Ain't that much magic in the world.

Luvvie: Ain't no what?

Darnell: Ain't that many wands in a world you can whip out when you're under constant attack.

Luvvie: Yup. Yup. Like Serena, which is why we have to constantly be like, "Look, we are here for you if they try to tear you down." I think it's a constant work to make sure that we are doing the community work to lift each other up because when the rest of the world is pointing arrows at us, we got to be the soft place that we land on.

Darnell: I'm like, "You're really going to fine Serena \$17,000. Really?"

Luvvie: Yes.

Darnell: I wanted to start a GoFundMe, let's pay that shit.

Luvvie: Look, Serena's going to pay it off like a bucket, but imagine like the fact that she shouldn't even have to, it's maddening. It's actually maddening, which is why we have to be super, super, super committed to being auto pro-Black. I'm talking, we got to do something to nullify the rest of the world's foolishness.

Darnell: Exactly. Let me tell you, my mantra is this, we cannot do to each other what the system does to us. I'll always say, if we are Black and we're in a world that is always at the ready to dispose of us, we can't turn around and dispose of one another, and particularly the moment like this, where things call out culture, with things like sort of retribution and punishment, which are consequences of us being socialized. I'm using these fancy words. We've been taught to believe that the only way that we can manage people is to lock them up to and discard of them, literally. We have prisons and jails. We know that mostly Black people are in them so that when folk, when we're in community, that's the way we respond to one another, but we can't do that. Radical Black love is about... We hear people talking about abolishing prisons because we understand that they are not relative to freedom, but I mean on a micro level, I'm talking about on a level of relationship, if we dispose of one another, we only aid white supremacy.

I've been on this kick, where I'm really thinking hard about what it means because the danger in talking about not disposing of people is, we don't have the language or the imagination, some of us, right? We don't have the reality of what it means to deal with people beyond punishment, and the way I explain this is I come from a family, a Black ass family from Camden, a large family that my grandparents' home was always full. When my mom and I, my sisters and I lost our home and was destroyed, they took us in, right? I was in one couch. My mom was in a couch. My sisters were upstairs, my aunt and her kids were there. We filled that house up. We was all up in there on quilts laying all over the place, but this is important because what it means is that I don't care what you did. You might have did some horrible shit the week before, cussed out a cousin, stole something from the house. You might be out there going through some substance abuse issues or just getting out of jail. If you knocked on that door, they will never let you go without eating or put you on the street.

You will never go house lift. That's the type of family I had. To me, that is a sort of representation of radical Black love. It means thinking about what systems need to be put in place so that all can be welcomed. Even the people that do wrong. Not that we do wrong and not hold them account. Now, we hold people accountable. We can create conditions for folk to name their wrongs and to get better, but in times like these, to your point, it's about loving each other enough to say like, "Look, we're going to figure out how we're going to all get right." Because we know that there's a world that's ready to tear you up, we're going to bring you back in. That's just real. That's just real. That's why I look at people I admire, it takes a lot of bravery to be out here, or in the social media where other than the world being a media maker. I've gotten quiet over the last few years. I remember Nicki Minaj fans tore me to threads, what's up. I was like, "I ain't going back on the Twitter no more."

Luvvie: It's rough. It's rough.

Darnell: It's rough, and all I said was I laughed when I was on a date and somebody said that Nicki Minaj was the greatest female rapper, and I said ha, ha, ha. They came at me so hard.

Luvvie: They came at you. I mean, I know I've experienced it. It's tough, especially when your peoples are the one coming for your neck, you know what I mean? It's one of those moments where it's like, "Did we forget grace?" I've also feel like, when you brought up therapy earlier, I was thinking, honestly, I feel like we now where our pains as badges of honor, and then we dispose of it on social as opposed to dealing with it in a space like therapy. I really hope more of us seek it out because it's really helpful.

Darnell: Yeah. I mean, and it's easy. I always say social media what it does, it really does allow us to operate as avatar.

Luvvie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Darnell: Advertise at the postal like complex human beings with feelings, who can be seen as having feelings, who can be seen as having hurt and joys and pain. What you do is you can attack a thing that you only feel is inanimate, your representational self, not a real human being. We deal with each other in that way, which is why I have to navigate very cavalierly because I want to remember on the other end of this, I know that folk only sometimes find community within virtual space and I respect that, but I'm also sometimes we got to... I want all of us to be surrounded by the type of support and the type of care in the real world too, and virtual reality is real. Social media is real community and real space, but like you said, I think so many times we act out or we act out a lot of our pain sometimes, our meanness sometimes because we feel like we're only targeting and I see it like an avatar. You just become something like a profile pic and not a real person, but Black radical love means we just got to treat each other better.

Also, like you said something about grace, I always say grace isn't cheap. I don't like to talk about grace, the hallmark is American idea of grace. I mean, grace means you're

sending care and a type of love, or at least a holding space that is enough for people to come to their senses to make amends. It's not cheap. It don't just mean people do you wrong and you just automatically forgive them. It means, as part of grace, it means that we want change in a process. I do think you're right, that we need to be more graceful. I think that our criticism needs to be more generous, and I think that a big part of our work is also having self-reflection and being self-reflective being able, before you call my shit, I call it on my own, you know what I'm saying? Then doing what we can to make that right.

Luvvie: That's real. On another note, you're a fashionista. Darnell be out here given looks, okay? First of all, when I got my haircut, I was like, "I need a part because Darnell's inspired me to get a part." Now I have my own custom part. How do you use your clothes and your style to tell your story?

Darnell: Oh my God. I love, and I've always had, and that's the thing that, I get tripped out a lot, like you out here always talking about the Black love and social justice, but you're up in the Gucci sneakers.

Luvvie: Why we got to pick one, why we got to pick one.

Darnell: Listen, I was like, "But I've been wearing that since I was in high school." I was working real hard at 15 and 14 saving my little coin and to get my little white kicks and cleaning them things with toothbrushes-

Luvvie: With toothbrush?

Darnell: Listen, I ain't play. I come from a family though, when I'm talking about style, I mean, even with little we were able to sort of stylize ourselves. Tutorial and like aesthetics was just super important. My mom would not let my sisters out the house unless the hair was done type of thing, right? Couldn't even walk to the store unless we had clothes on, you feel me? There was no going to the store in pajamas. You go find you a shirt, you go iron some pants, type of thing. I was in leather pants and a ruffle shirt with a hat on fedora. When I was 10, my mom dressed me, so the roots run deep. As a Black person who's perceived as man's agenda, beat it out walk into the world, I use style one, as a form of self-representation. It's political for me too.

One, I wear what I feel like...I dress according to how I feel, which is super important, but I also... For instance, I had to give a talk, and this is a perfect example, at this conference. It brought people from around the country, mayor, their staff, preachers, whole bunch of people who do work with Black men and boys into conversations. This was a month, I think. I know that most people are wrong. When they think about Black boys and men think that the Black boys and men, they ought to be fighting for are mostly straight and cisgender. That's people, their mess in their mind. You know what I wore to give my closing keynote, a red Calvin Klein suit.

Luvvie: Yes, yes.

Darnell: With a golden stripe on the side, and that was the satirical choice. I got made that choice in a room where people I knew would be in suits, mostly in ties or-

Luvvie: Gray and Black. They'd be in gray and Black.

Darnell: Right, because it represents... I was like, "You know what? I'm going to wear this red suit." That was a move that I did to push against the norms, the rules that tell me, as a Black man, that I am supposed to tighten myself, restrict myself, confined myself, cage myself to some rules. I'll wear a long ass... Look, and what I love is when I walk in the streets, in Bed-Stuy or anywhere really, and people just be looking like, "Yo, he straight up got a beard and a long subtle that kind of looked like a drip. What are you giving?"

Luvvie: He's giving you life. That's what he's giving you, his life.

Darnell: Then you have little kids, these little boys that always went up like, "Yo, Mr. You are so fly. That look is so nice." That is just, I want to give... Fashion for me is like freedom, that's it. Yeah, I just come up out the cage, I'm like, "I'm wearing whatever I feel." I'm going to get me some... Yeah, I would need some shorts that's real short, and that's what I felt like. Next thing you know, I got some other dudes in my neighborhood, they got stay shorts on.

Luvvie: Look, style. Okay. Style icon. No, you'll be on your Instagram like, "Yes, Darnell. Yes." Anytime he gets a fresh cut, he post it, I'd be like, "Come on with this line in that is so crisp. Let these people have it." I love it, and I think it is the duality. You don't have to be so... Yes, you should be up to wear Gucci sneakers whenever you want and also then be in a fist up T-shirt.

Darnell: I wear them together.

Luvvie: Correct. Why not?

Darnell: Come through, okay.

Luvvie: Why not? As you're doing all of this, activist, lecturer, teacher, author, host, all of that, how are you taking care of yourself? What does self care looking like for you?

Darnell: Oh my gosh. This is such an important question right now as I am battling sciatica that just developed last week. I'm so glad you... Oh my gosh. That developed partially, it's sometimes the response to stress, sometimes it response to travel. If you're traveling a lot and you're sitting, your sciatic nerve, which is sort of near your buttocks and runs down your leg at the bottom of your spine. I'm on pain meds right now. A few months before that, I ended up in a hospital for five days with a condition called rhabdomyolysis, which is a breakdown of your muscle tissue that flows then into your bloodstream and can damage your kidneys. What happens is, and I'm telling this because this is so important. What happens is you have a protein called creatine kinase. You're only supposed to have 150 to 200 account. My count was 288,000.



Luvvie: What?

Darnell: Yeah, and I ended up hospitalized for five days. You know how that happened because I started working out with a new trainer and we overdid it. The next day I woke up and I shoveled. What's interesting about this is that my body over the last several months sort of as my travel has kicked up, has been speaking very loudly to me. Yeah. The rhabdo was like, my body's saying you overdid it. You know what I'm saying? I was dehydrated when I was working out. I worked out and traveled the next day, hospitalized for five days, missed my very first pre-book launch event because I was in the hospital. My body was screaming then. I'm sitting here now, literally sitting here with sciatica. Again, my body is like, you're doing the most, and for, particularly for Black people, not just Black men, but Black folk who are somehow we are... This is a special issue with Black men who will have pains, but we will normalize our pain. "Oh, I'm supposed to feel that way after that workout." "There's pain in my leg. I'm going to just keep walking." You're back in the hospital.

I've been much more mindful about listening to my body. I got to travel six flights between tomorrow and Sunday and I'm doing a couple of things. If I'm coming over four hours, I don't care what you all booked. I literally have a condition that requires me not to be sitting too long. You've got to get business class or first class, or I'm not coming. You understand, because you're not paying my medical bills. These are the types of things I have to do or saying like, "You know what? My body right now is screaming and I can't come." I'm really, really, really... I'm in my 40s, early. I'm 42 and this is that age where I really have to be thinking about my life, my wellbeing, not just my spirit, but my body too. In terms of my spirit, I spend lots and lots of time alone and in very small curator community of friends because I'm in front of a lot of people, and a lot of energy, mostly good, but what people don't see, they... Some people, they're like, "Oh, you live such a great..." I'm like, "You don't want to switch."

Luvvie: Because look, you can't even hang.

Darnell: Listen, do you know... you saw me yesterday on that stage at the Sandberg, but I was on pain meds. That's the... You understand? I'm out here. I still have a life. I still have intimate life when I can have it. I still got to do things like making sure I have... I really try to keep a community of accountability. I have a big brother and a close friend who's a doctor who checks up on me. He becomes something like my personal doctor, my landlord, and see the big sister of mine is also a medical doctor and my best friend. Every day, they're like, "Where are you? What are you doing? How you're feeling and encourage." Two things I just did. I went away to the mountains this past weekend and did nothing. I ate at the fire pit, walked through by the river. The weekend before that, I went to a beach house and just tried to take part of myself with people that I love and trust, who love me back.

Luvvie: Oh, that's so important. I ask every guest this because I need people to understand what it looks like when you were prominent and visible. It might all look nice, but we need to figure out ways to take care of ourselves, so that is clutch. That is so clutch. I need you to make sure you are taking care of yourself. Say no to a whole bunch of people.

Darnell: Listen that no is at the ready, okay? This leg, I'm telling you now, if this leg is hurting by tonight, I ain't getting on a plane tomorrow, okay? Just so we clear.

Luvvie: People are just going to have to deal.

Darnell: They go out to Skype me in.

Luvvie: You all are going to FaceTime him and Google Hangout him in something. Take care of yourself. Look, I think it's so important, so I really appreciate that. You are love in person. You are a walking form of love. I really, really appreciate you for coming on Rants and Randomness and blessing us with these words of wisdom.

Darnell: I'm honored actually. I'm honored. You all know I love me some Luvvie.

Luvvie: You are the best, and I want everybody, if you are listening to this episode and you don't pick up [No Ashes in the Fire](#), me and you going to beef. I need you all to go buy this book. It's everywhere where books are sold, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, all that independent bookstores. [Grab a copy because this book is a gift to the world.](#)

Darnell: Thank you.

Luvvie: Darnell, I'm going to holler at you. I'm going to text you to see how you're doing.

Darnell: Appreciate you.

Luvvie: Stay up, stay well, stay Black.

Darnell: Thank you. I'm going to do... That's the one thing I got on locked. I'm going to stay Black.

Luvvie: Stay Black. All right, we ain't got no other choice, but to stay Black.

Darnell: Yeah, and you keep soaring and thanks for having me on.

Luvvie: Thank you.

Shout out to Darnell Moore for joining me. You all see why I love him so dearly. He is a vessel of wisdom and drops gems every time he speaks. Please follow him on social media. He's @mooredarnell on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and [@Moore\\_Darnell](#) on Twitter. That's M-O-O-R-E D-A-R-N-E-L-L. Please buy his book, [No Ashes in the Fire](#). You can visit his website, [darnellmoore.com](#) for information on his tour, on his book and all that good stuff in his book. You can buy it anywhere where books are sold. Much love to Chicago Recording Company for partnering with me on this and bringing me the radio voice. Subscribe to Rants and Randomness on Apple Podcast, Spotify, SoundCloud, wherever you get it, please also rate it, you know what I mean? Review all that because if you review it, I might actually shout you out on this show. Follow the podcast on social media on Twitter is [@rantsrandomness](#), no and. On Instagram, it's [@rantsandrandomness](#). Now, I get a lot of questions in my messages and I think a lot of them would be good to answer on a bonus episode because they're so universal. If you'd like to

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