



## Rants and Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi

Say Yes (with Elaine Welteroth) - Episode 32

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My peoples, welcome to Rants and Randomness. I'm Luvvie Ajayi, your side-eye sorceress and ranter in chief. On this episode, I'm bringing you an interview that I had with Elaine Welteroth, former editor in chief of Teen Vogue, journalist, and a [judge on Project Runway](#). Now, she is also a New York Times best-selling author. Her book, [More Than Enough](#), dropped on June 11th, and my girl made it on the list. Flex on them, Elaine. In this conversation, Elaine talks to me about growing up as the girl who always knew what she wanted to be, being an intern who never left and ended up promoting herself, and her journey in this topsy-turvy media world. I'm so proud of her, and I'm excited for you to listen in. So come on through and listen to the New York Times best-selling author, Elaine Welteroth, and I in conversation. Let's jump in.

### Interview with Elaine Welteroth

[00:52]

Luvvie: Rants fam, I am so excited to have my girl Elaine Welteroth joining us on this episode. Elaine, yay.

Elaine: Yay. I'm so excited to basically do what we do offline on your podcast.

Luvvie: Exactly. All of our shenanigans.

Elaine: Exactly.

Luvvie: So I'ma give people your bio because they already know you're epic, but I'm going to present it to them.

Elaine: Oh god.

Luvvie: Elaine Welteroth is an award-winning journalist, author, and [judge on the new Project Runway](#). She was most recently editor in chief of Teen Vogue, where she in 2017 became the youngest person ever appointed editor in chief, and in 2012, had been the first African-American ever to hold the post of beauty and health director at a Condé Nast publication. Prior to Teen Vogue, she was a senior beauty editor at Glamour and the beauty and style editor at Ebony. She's now a leading expert and advocate for the next generation of change-makers. She's written for the hit show Grown-ish and has appeared on camera for a range of media outlets, including ABC News and Netflix, and she just dropped her debut book, [More Than Enough](#), which, yes, Elaine, we out

here, author. Come on, published author. Know what I mean? So I'm excited to have you. Hey, girl.

Elaine: Hey, girl. Listen, if your girl doesn't hype up like Luvvie just hyped me, you need to find a new crew.

Luvvie: Look, we got to be the biggest hype squads, like yes, that's my homie, that's my homie, hey. Oh man.

Elaine: I love you.

Luvvie: So I like starting every episode by asking my guest what did you want to do or be when you were growing up?

Elaine: Oh man. The journey to figuring out the answer to that question is in my book because it ain't easy. I wasn't one of those people who popped out of the womb knowing exactly what I wanted to do or be in the world. But I remember being really young and during my bath time, where most kids would have their moms reading them stories, my story time was me being the imaginary interviewer of imaginary celebrities in the bathtub. So I would pretend to be Oprah or Barbara Walters interviewing everybody from Diana Ross to Gandhi to Michael Jackson. I would just make up these elaborate interviews. It's so funny because I think that when we all look back and look at our childhood and how we played, there are so many clues there that can point you in the direction of your purpose and your passions. I think, as you get older, those things can get beat out of you, so if you're lucky, you get to a point where you can fight back and reclaim that little girl, that person that you were before the world started putting limitations on the way you dream.

So all that to say, I didn't even know that there was a job title called magazine editor or beauty editor or even editor in chief. I didn't even know that existed. I grew up in a very small town in Northern California where most people don't really ever leave or they definitely don't dream of moving to New York City or working for a magazine one day. So it was a process to understanding that this is something I could do. I just didn't have a lot of examples of role models, people who look like me, doing it big like that. So yeah.

Luvvie: So you went from playing with toys and interviewing in the bathroom to doing what you do now, so what was little Elaine like?

Elaine: Little Elaine was enterprising and relentless. I think I've always been ambitious. I write about this in my book. I have a chapter called "Brown Girl Boss," and it tells the story of me in fourth grade making my own beauty salon in the backyard of my best friend's house. I don't know when we went from just playing to being hardcore little Brown girl bosses back there trying to ... We weren't even making money, but we were about our business. We built this salon with scrap cardboard that we had gone around the cul-de-sac knocking on doors asking people for, which then became the building blocks of our space. We built our front desk, and then we would steal her mom's folded sheets, and we put those up, and they would be the dividers between our little stations where we did hand massages and head massages and hairstyling and nail polish. We stole her sister's nail polish out of her Caboodle just to build this salon.

It's so funny because we even made our own little fake cigarettes that we would buy, quote-unquote "buy," from our own little store in the backyard, and then we'd go around the back of the house and light up our fake cigarettes. Because in my mind, that's what you do when you're the boss of your own life. You run your business, and you can smoke if you want to. It's so funny because I look back, I'm like, "Gosh, I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit." In some way, I think that salon was also us asserting ourselves in an otherwise really white community. We were both two Brown girls. She was Mexican, I was a Black girl, mixed-race girl, and it was our way of adding value to the community, to be seen by these other girls, and eventually some of them even came and started working for us and with us. So I think it's a bit foreshadowing, to look back and see who I was as a little kid, because eventually I did become that boss lady that I had dreamed of being one day.

Luvvie: You became the person you didn't see at that point. You post on your Insta Stories about your mom and your family all the time, and I love it, and I always wonder how your family instilled and turned you into this Elaine. Because, a lot of times, we see where people are today, and we never really know their story. Your mom is dope and is in your Insta Stories all the time.

Elaine: She is.

Luvvie: She's the biggest hype woman ever. So what character traits did she instill in you, and do you still see that in yourself?

Elaine: Okay. I'm so glad you're asking me this question because my mom is the dopest. She is the hero of my story, honestly. I think people might come to this book for me, but you're going to walk away just loving my mom. She's who this book is really about because, in so many ways, she shaped the person that I am. I owe so much of the best parts of me to her. I think, as a young Black girl in a predominantly white town, neighborhood, it was really important for me to have a Black mom who was proud of who she was, who was strong and sensitive, and parents who collectively created space for me to explore my identity and to be creative and to not ... They never made me feel like I had to fit into a box. I think the world outside does that enough. They never made me feel like that.

Same for my brother. He is a punk rocker and has always been since he came out the womb with his little ... I feel like he came out the womb with an electric guitar, and he takes after my dad a lot, who's an acoustic guitar playing hippie white guy, and my mom's this gospel singing Black woman who was raised in the Black church, born in the South. So my brother is this Brown punk rock kid who never really fit in in any spaces, but he was never about conforming. He was always about staying true to who he is. So I had a lot of role models in my household who encouraged just being an individual.

My parents, well, they were raised ... Their generation, their experience of parenting was keep a child in their place, tell them that they can speak when spoken to. It was very authoritative. While my parents definitely were authorities, they allowed us to have a voice, and they allowed us to express ourselves in whatever way we wanted to, and they encouraged us to dream and to be happy. They wanted us to be happy. I realized later in my life just how much of a gift that really was because I see with some of my other friends, their parents were ... They had more of a prescribed path laid out for them, and there was more pressure on a lot of people in my life from their parents around what they should be and how they should be and what they should

do with their careers, and I didn't really have that. I didn't have those confines that I had to fit into. It is still hard to figure out what to do. Sometimes, I wish I had more guidance. But, in retrospect, I think that the freedom and the liberation that I was raised with was really additive to my evolution.

Luvvie: You were raised in Cali?

Elaine: Raised in Cali. I'm a Bay Area girl. Shout out to the 510 folks out there. Yeah. I'm very California. If you know California people, especially Bay Area people, I feel like we're good people. We're down home. There's a lot of humility that we're raised with. We like to dance. I feel like we carry the sunshine with us, and I feel like I brought that California sunny disposition with me to New York, even though now I'm low-key a New Yorker because I've been here for going on 11 years.

Luvvie: Yeah, you're an honorary New York. So what'd you major in in college?

Elaine: Okay. I first majored in psychology because-

Luvvie: Oh my god, same.

Elaine: Same. Because, basically, we're nosy, right? That's really what it comes down to. You like to get other people's stories. I felt like ever since I was that little girl in the bathtub doing these imaginary interviews, I've always just loved pulling the stories out of people. Even as I grew up, in college, I found myself as always the girl who was at the college party in the corner getting someone to tell me their whole life story, pouring out their guts, crying, and we'd be holding each other's hands. I'd always, like, "Tell me more, girl, tell me more. And then what happened?" So I was like, "Maybe I should be a psychologist." Then I realized, "They don't care about style." I'm like, "Dang, it's so dusty in my psychology classes. No one cares about my outfit. No one is coming with a look."

That part of me has always been something I wanted to express and I wanted to explore that in my career, but I also was very intimidated by capital-F fashion, like the fashion industry just being so intimidating to me and so exclusive and I had no idea how to break into it. So I wanted to find a middle ground, something that would allow me to express this storytelling and interview and writing journalistic side of me but also something that married the part of me that really has a strong sense of aesthetic and for visuals, so magazine journalism was actually perfect for me. I was a magazine junkie growing up. I read Essence Magazine religiously growing up, so the idea that I could one day be an editor who had the opportunity to hold the pen and write the narrative around what young Black women are and what young people of color are today was just an extraordinary dream come true. So yeah.

Luvvie: So what did you end up ... You got your psych degree, or did you end up getting your degree in magazine-

Elaine: Oh, my bad. I didn't even answer your frigging question. Okay, so I started out with a ... I'm so sorry. I started out with a psychology degree, I mean, a psychology major, and then I changed majors and I majored in communications with a concentration in public relations and a minor in journalism because there wasn't a journalism major offered at my school.

Luvvie: Bad. So then you graduated. What was your first job?

Elaine: I actually graduated early on accident.

Luvvie: How?

Elaine: Because ... Well, listen, it sounds very overachiever-ish, but I think ... Okay. Let me reword that. When I say I graduated from college early, it makes me sound like an overachiever, but, really, it is the result of making one of the biggest mistakes of my life that has been a regret to this day. Well, I've actually reframed it as ... It's not a regret. It's something that needed to happen. But I made the cardinal mistake that I tell every young girl to never do, which is this: I followed my high school sweetheart to college.

Luvvie: What? Okay. Give me the tea. Give me that tea.

Elaine: Right? So I write about this story in my book. I was a straight-A student. I was senior and junior class president. I was in sports. I was a track runner. I did hurdles. I did cheerleading. And I'm also a first generation college student and a person of color, so I could have gone to my dream school had I applied. I grew up wanting to go to Stanford University, but, girl, then I fell in love with the bad boy and really just got distracted, and I never, ever applied to my dream school. I never applied to a single Ivy League or even a UC. I blindly followed my high school sweetheart to Sacramento State University, which, listen, shout out to my Hornets, I am not ashamed of the school, I am only disappointed in my younger self for the reason, my motivation for going there, which was following this boy. Then, girl, I got there. Guess what I found out?

Luvvie: What?

Elaine: This fool wasn't even enrolled.

Luvvie: Stop it. Stop it.

Elaine: He wasn't even going to class. So here I am, now, whatever, 18 years old, 17 years old, in Cow Town Sacramento, in the middle of California two and a half hours away from home, and I got to make it work. He did come back. I will say it. He was a year older than me, and he started going to class again once I arrived. But, then, ultimately, he ended up in jail.

Luvvie: Wow.

Elaine: There I was, left in Sacramento to my own devices. So what that taught me is never again will I hand over the wheel to another man. You are the master of your own destiny. You get to be in the driver's seat of your own life. I'm never handing the wheel over to a man ever again. I think I was operating under this ride or die syndrome, a mentality that a lot of us have.

Luvvie: Ooh. Ride or die is dangerous, yo.

Elaine: Girl. I write about the ride or die syndrome. I have a whole chapter called "Ride or Die Syndrome" in my book that goes into this because I think, as successful women, as ambitious

women, we rarely talk about our relationships and the roles that they play in either helping us get where we're going or actually deterring us and taking us all the way off our track. I was very close to never making it where I wanted to go because of bad relationships and not knowing when to say, "Where the hell are we going, and you know what, stop the car, I'm getting out. I'm done riding or dying for you."

Luvvie: Right? I ain't dying. Why is that an option?

Elaine: I ain't dying with you, brother. Yeah, so I talk about that in the book, and it's kind of a vulnerable part of my story because it's so ... But it's so real. So many of us go through that. I even stayed with him when he went to jail.

Luvvie: Wow.

Elaine: While I was in college, I was living this dual reality where I was trying to maintain this existence of being this high-achieving student who was trying to make friends in a new environment, just trying to do well in school, but then at 8:00 PM every night, I had a collect call coming to my dorm room that I could not miss. I was too embarrassed to tell my friends why I had to leave, so I'd make up stories about why I had to leave study group and race back to my dorm, or I would leave parties or not go to parties because I felt like I had to be there for him. It's something that I talk about because I hope that by telling my truth, harder truths to share and vulnerable stories from the past, that hopefully some young girl reading this story who sees herself in me will cycle through that bad relationship faster than I did. I definitely stayed too long. I think it's important that we, as women, are able to identify when something is expired and to let it go.

Luvvie: Yes.

Elaine: Sometimes, things break for a reason because they break so that we can have a breakthrough. I think we're all raised with this weird ... Not weird. I think we're all raised with this mentality to make it work. When you're ambitious, you feel like you can make anything work. But some things aren't meant to work, and it's okay to let it go, and it's okay to-

Luvvie: Some things aren't meant to work.

Elaine: Right?

Luvvie: That's it.

Elaine: Some things break on purpose, and it's not up to you to put it back together and to make it work. Sometimes, you just got to let it go. I also think we are raised with this idea that our value is attributed to things outside of ourselves, like the men we date, like the jobs we hold, like the paychecks we earn, and that's just false. We have the value. We are the value. It's all inside of us, and we are enough on our own, with or without these things. It took me time to really understand what that meant and to let go of things that force me to shrink or that threatened my growth. Now, I feel like only now in my early 30s, I feel like standing on all that wisdom gained from my 20s, can I really step into relationships and work with that full confidence. But I certainly didn't have it all in my 20s. I definitely didn't. And who does, you know what I mean?

Luvvie: Nobody. I think we're all pretty foolish in our 20s. I think it's a life's rite of passage to be foolish in your 20s. You have to go through those stupid mistakes.

Elaine: You do.

Luvvie: Because, one, it makes for great books and good stories to tell, but, also, I think it just really gives you perspective when you're on the other side.

Elaine: Totally.

Luvvie: Because you'll be like, "I've already been there, done that, got the t-shirt," and now I can be better.

Elaine: Yes.

Luvvie: So a lot of people see us soaring and doing all these things. I remember when you were announced as the editor in chief of Teen Vogue and how crazy that went. First of all, walk me through how you got your first magazine job.

Elaine: So I stalked this woman named Harriet Cole, who was at the time-

Luvvie: Yes, legendary.

Elaine: Yes, legendary. At the time, she was the editor in chief of Ebony, but what really attracted me to her when I found out about her and read her bio was just how multifaceted her career in media was. She started out in magazines, but then she branched out, and she became a best-selling author, she had a syndicated radio show, she had a national column, she was on all of the big morning shows and had a TV presence. She was able to figure out how to carve out her own lane to be her authentic self across multiple media platforms, and I just ... That is so inspiring because to that point, I felt like every job title was so confining and limiting and couldn't fully capture my unique set of gifts and talents. I really wanted a job that would be fulfilling and exciting and would ignite my passions.

I felt really lost in my career struggle, in my career journey, until I found her, right? It was right before I graduated, and I stalked her until she gave me an informational interview. I called so many times, her assistant literally was on the verge of just being like, "I'm about to call the security guard on you." Because I literally remember telling her, "Oh, I'll just come bring her coffee next week, just give me a 15-minute window that'd work for her," and she was like, "Don't you live in California?" I'm like, "Yeah, but that's okay. I'll just fly there. It's no big deal. She's like, "Do not fly to New York to bring her coffee, crazy girl."

So eventually I got an informational phone call with her, and it changed my life. It was so reinforcing to have a woman that I could see myself in and for her to take the time to speak with me, it just affirmed everything that I wanted to do and be. At the end of the call, I said, "If there's ever an opportunity to work with you, please keep me in mind," and we hung up, and I thought, "I'll never hear from her again, and honestly it's okay because she's already changed my life. I'm off to the races. I have a clear vision for where I'm going. I'm going to create a game

plan A through Z to get there and make it happen." Then, long story short, five months later, once I had already locked in the magazine internship of my dreams at Essence, Harriet Cole called me back.

Luvvie: Wow.

Elaine: I thought it was a butt dial. I was working ... At the time, I had graduated early, and my plan was move back home, scariest thing ever, by the way. For any ambitious college graduate, moving home is representative of death. But I was like, "It's okay. It's a means to an end. I'm going to use this last semester that I would've had in school to make \$10,000. I'm going to save every penny. I've got two jobs." I worked at a media company in San Francisco at the front desk as a receptionist, and then nights and weekends, I was a waitress serving Stanford University students, by the way. I was right next to my dream school, so it was even more humbling. I saved every penny so that, by June 1st, I could move to New York and work at a magazine as an intern.

That is exactly what happened. I got the Essence internship, and 30 days out, before I was getting ready to move to New York for Essence, Harriet Cole called me, and she said, "I remembered you. I remembered our phone call, and I'm looking for a new assistant. I have a shoot in Malibu. I remembered that you lived in California."

Luvvie: Oh, wow.

Elaine: "So I thought I would reach out and see if you wanted to meet me on set. I'll pay you \$250 for the day. You'll be my production assistant."

Luvvie: What?

Elaine: "And if things go well, there could be a job waiting for you in New York City." I was like, "What? Wait." I was like, "Girl" ... In my head, I was like, "I would pay you to work for you for a day."

Luvvie: Right? Right?

Elaine: Yeah. So that was the beginning of everything. I went to that set. It turned out to be a cover shoot with Serena Williams, which she did not mention.

Luvvie: What?

Elaine: Yes, girl, it turned out to be a cover shoot. I was just on. I just felt like, "I am in my element." It was an incredible day. We had great chemistry together. As a working relationship, we had great chemistry. At the end of the day, she offered me the job to come move to New York to work for her as an intern first, and then she said if things could go well, it could turn into an assistant role. So I had my first career dilemma on my hands where I was like, "Wow, six months ago, I had no idea how I was going to make this dream happen, and now I have two of the most prominent Black magazines giving me job offers, internship offers. What do I do?" Ultimately, I decided to follow the woman and the role model and the mentor who would ultimately give me a richer day to day learning experience, and I'm so glad I did.



It was a hard decision to make, by the way, because Essence was a sexier choice on the resume and to all my friends. They were like, "Why would you work for Ebony?" At the time, it was dustier. It was sort of like your auntie, uncle magazine, whereas Essence was every Black girl magic dream come true epitomized in those pages, fashion, beauty, it was more sexy. But I was like, "No, this is a God thing." Finding out about Harriet was a God thing. Having Harriet remember me and call me back and give me this opportunity to work on a cover shoot at 17, 18 years old ... Or, no, sorry, I was 19 years old, I think, 18. How old are you when you graduate from college?

Luvvie: Wow.

Elaine: Anyway, the point is, coming out the gates having these kinds of opportunities was more valuable to me in the long run and I could see that, so I had to call Essence and I had to say, "I'm going to work for Ebony," and I started my career there as Harriet Cole's summer intern and then eventually became her assistant and worked my way up the masthead from there.

Luvvie: What did you find has always been the thing that served you the most in these positions, that really allowed you to rise up the ranks?

Elaine: Saying yes. Saying yes and finding ways to add value beyond the call of duty. I think that's the biggest thing. Actually, my first promotion, I actually gave it to myself. It's a funny story that I do write in my book about how I actually went from being a paid intern at \$10 an hour to becoming an actual staff magazine editor. Basically, my internship was supposed to end August 31st.

Luvvie: Okay.

Elaine: But no one told me to leave. So then I just kept coming. Miraculously, I just kept getting a paycheck. Then, I never said anything and no one else ever said anything, so I just kept working. So, then, September comes, October, November, I'm still getting paid. So, eventually, I just decide, "Okay, I'm going to change the title in my signature to production assistant."

Luvvie: Word.

Elaine: Because that's kind of what I am, you know? So I just gave myself a little fraudulent promotion. Then, the craziest thing, Luvvie, is that then people started calling me production assistant. It was legitimized, weirdly. It was like I had spoken into existence, I made it happen, suddenly I'm the production assistant, boom. No one said anything. Then, eventually, I leveraged that to get a real promotion. I said yes to everything. I took on so many things and I was adding so much value that by the time they realized, "Wait a minute, this girl was an intern, she was supposed to leave months ago. How is she even still here?"

Luvvie: Yo.

Elaine: It was sort of like, "Well, damn, now we need her. We need her. We can't imagine not having this kind of support, so how do we figure out how to pay her and keep her?" So I was able to leverage ... By the way, in the middle of the recession. This was 2008, so it was right when everyone was losing their jobs and it was really ... There was a lot of income insecurity, and it

was a difficult time for anyone to keep a job, let alone to get a promotion. But I went there, I was bold. I was bold as ... I was very millennial, in terms of the stereotype. I went in there, and I said, "You know what? I'm so grateful for this opportunity, but I would like" ... I basically went in there, and I asked for a proper promotion and a raise, and I got it.

Luvvie: That's bananas.

Elaine: I was able to double my income overnight in the middle of the recession for a job I actually technically didn't even have.

Luvvie: That is amazing.

Elaine: It's crazy. It's kind of crazy. Looking back, I'm like, "I don't recommend that approach." It was kind of a miracle that it worked for me, but, yeah, that's how it happened. But it's hard work. It is hard work. I pulled many, many late nights. I stayed after midnight the majority of the time I worked at Ebony, just trying to build infrastructure, just trying to also help us be seen in a media world that is really plagued by racism. I felt like I started from the bottom of the bottom. As an intern at Ebony, we were at the bottom of the media hierarchy. So I kind of came in as an underdog, and I really wanted to help the industry see the value of Black media. I had to fight for every single thing that we got. I had to fight for invitations to fashion week. I had to wheel and deal to get videographers to trail me backstage at fashion shows, to work for free. We were operating with limited budget and limited manpower, and I think all of that training was actually so important.

I know I would not have climbed the ranks at Condé Nast once I eventually got there without that kind of training. So I tell everyone who's starting out in their career, just say yes to everything and do not chase the sexy. You have to follow your instincts and follow the opportunities that are going to be richer learning experiences day to day because they're going to help you leap-frog in your career long term.

Luvvie: You showed up, you made yourself indisposible, you ended up getting promoted, and nobody realized you weren't supposed to be there because you made sure you were actually going to be there. So then you end up at Condé Nast and then end up as editor in chief, like youngest editor in chief?

Elaine: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Luvvie: First of all, how did that change your life?

Elaine: It changed my life in a lot of ways. When I got that promotion, I was 29 years old. I had never thought that I would have an opportunity like that at that point in my career trajectory. I thought it would take many more years and maybe even decades to get there. But we live in a very different time. Excuse me. We live in a very different time now. I just remember that day, what really meant the most was the resounding support from my community and the people, the Black people on Black Twitter ... Black Twitter really showed up and showed out that day, I have to say. I looked at my phone, and while the reality is, and I write about this in the book, I

was dealing with a tricky negotiation, which I won't leave any spoilers, I will let you guys read the book, but it was kind of a tricky time for me internally.

But the beauty and the most triumphant aspect of that moment was looking at my phone and seeing my tribe of support way out there in the world, people I had never met who were celebrating with me, and I recognized that I am in this seat for them. I am here to represent for my people and for my community. As difficult as it is to be a first or to be the youngest or the only to do something, when you remember that you walk into those rooms not as one but as one of thousands and you have your people behind you, man, it makes you so much more bold and courageous. I needed that kind of support at that time. It was a tricky time in my career, but it was also the most incredible. I think one thing we don't talk about, and we love to celebrate a first, we love to see each other rise up the ranks in any industry and it's so important to do, it's so important to hold each other up and to celebrate each other's shine, but we also have to create space for the underside of a dream realized. We need to be able to create space for talking about sometimes the highest highs happen at the same time as the lowest lows, and how do you navigate that duality?

We live in a world where we're watching each other's success stories play out online, but you're only seeing a tiny slice of the truth, and so I think that's why I really wanted to write this book, to tell more of the story that can never fit in a pithy Instagram caption or a tweet. I think it's important for us to share our full truth and to share the why and the how behind the what you think you know when you see these headlines and when you see the highlight reels, so that's what this book is really about.

Luvvie: Yes, I took it to Mexico, and I was reading it on the beach, and I loved how it just delved-

Elaine: Oh, casual. I like how you just dropped that in, just, "I just read this book on the beach in Mexico." Let them know, Luvvie. Let them know about that Luvvie lifestyle.

Luvvie: First of all, don't even ... Elaine.

Elaine: That's better.

Luvvie: That's like work, I'm just saying, because I had to take a mini-sabbatical, and having your book and just reading through all the things you've basically been through, it's the perfect time for [More Than Enough](#) to drop. I think nowadays as everybody sees all the glitz and the glamor, but they don't really understand all the stuff that goes through, because even your Teen Vogue ascent, it didn't come with smooth roads, it wasn't just all the hype. So I'm really glad that you wrote the book and that it's dropping now, and you are a constant source of inspiration. For those who listen to Rants and Randomness, if you also listen to my other podcast, Jesus and Jollof, you know Elaine Welteroth is the reason why we started that podcast. We're going to put that on Elaine's Wikipedia: "She is the reason why" ...

Elaine: Right. Right, right, right.

Luvvie: But, yeah, no, your book is dope.

Elaine: The invisible co-founder of ...

Luvvie: Yes, you are the spiritual co-founder of Jesus and Jollof. After we abuse Elaine-

Elaine: One of my proudest accomplishments, by the way.

Luvvie: I'm saying, it has to be because you are the catalyst of foolishness. That's ultimately what you did there. You were the catalyst of foolishness. So your book dropped June 11th, so people can get it everywhere where books are sold. We want to turn Elaine into a New York Times bestseller.

Elaine: I'm just trying to keep up with Luvvie, y'all. You know what I mean? Luvvie, she just came out the gates as a first-time author, making that New York Times bestseller list. By the way, thank you, Luvvie, because I want to shout you out. This is a time where I get a chance to say thank you to you, not just for supporting me in this moment, but for being a part of my journey. You've been an inspiration to me, not just because of your success with ... P.S. yes, I am trying to be a New York Times bestseller like you, but, also, we've been on a spiritual journey, and everything that happens in your career, in my mind, is a manifestation of a deeper spiritual evolution.

I remember I was going through kind of a difficult time in my career, and we were talking offline about it. You gave me a devotional that I read every morning. It is a game-changer for anyone listening to this podcast. Yo. Do yourself and your girlfriend a favor and do what Luvvie did for me, which is get this devotional. Please get my book, too, but also get this devotional. It's called Jesus Calling.

Luvvie: Yeah, Jesus Calling.

Elaine: Honestly, Luvvie, it's like you changed my life just with that gift, and I'd never had a friend buy me a book before, let alone a devotional. It was sort of early in our friendship when you did that, but it left a huge impression on me about the kind of sister you are. We do a lot of cheering for each other on social media, but you backed it up in real life, and you've done that for me many times. So I just want to shout you out, and I hope that people listen to this podcast. They already are inspired by you. But do something for your sisterhood, pay it forward, and get that devotional and my book, and my book, for your girl because it's like a gift that keeps on giving. Since you gave that to me, I've given it to other people.

Luvvie: Oh my goodness.

Elaine: I found myself taking pictures of those devotional pages and sending it to folks like Ava DuVernay or my girl. I have a whole group text-

Luvvie: Slight flex.

Elaine: Yeah, well, she wrote my foreword so I have to shout her out.

Luvvie: She did. She did.

Elaine: But, yeah, I send that to my girlfriends and it's such a source of inspiration. So thank you, Luvvie.

Luvvie: Yo, I'm so happy I could do that for you, and honestly, my whole thing is I want to see us all win, and I know we all go through some of these struggles siloed, and I really encourage that now, even though we might be the first and the only in certain industries, because we have each other, we can then lean on each other and be like, "Yo, we're going through the same struggles or we're the same level. Let's help each other grow."

Elaine: Yep, get to the next level, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Luvvie: I'm glad. You've fed me. You've helped my career, too. As a friend, I know I can tap on you whenever things pop up, so that, for me, is a gift. So, yeah, I always ask my guests what are you doing to take care of yourself? So, now, book launch time is nuts, right? Book launch time is insane, and you're doing a thousand things, and you on Project Runway and all of this stuff. What is the Elaine self-care routine?

Elaine: Ooh, it's such a good question. I do two things, and they're very simple. One is I try to prioritize my sleep because I'm just a better human and I just can function at a higher level, and everyone around me benefits when I have gotten my rest, so I try to really fight for that time. Right now, I will tell you, I stayed out till ... Auntie E. stayed out till 4:00 AM-

Luvvie: What?

Elaine: ... the other night after the CSCAs, and, girl, I feel like I will never recover. I am so exhausted. But last night, I slept for 10 hours because I was like, "I have to get back into a good place." So sleep is super important. That devotional is a big part of my self-care routine. I try to carve out a few minutes, even if it's just five minutes, every morning to read it, to spend time with it, to spend time with the Holy Spirit, to breathe. I think that devotional does a really good job of reframing challenges and putting you in a more grateful, centered place. It just reminds you that the Holy Spirit is with you in everything that you're doing.

Luvvie: Yes.

Elaine: And it reminds me, in this new chapter of my life, the Holy Spirit is my agent, my manager, my publicist.

Luvvie: Yes, yes.

Elaine: My business manager, my accountant. I have everything I need. So I can operate from a place of abundance and not from scarcity when I am out in the world negotiating for myself or stepping into scary spaces, which I don't really feel that way. I feel like I'm in a really good, good, good place right now. But sometimes you feel like you need things that are outside of yourself. You need support. You need this and that. It's like you have it, you have it in the Holy Spirit, and I think that your devotional reminds me of that.

Then, the other thing is just ... And it's going to be cheesy for some of y'all maybe. Don't judge me. And, actually, Luvvie, you'll feel me on this because you are an engaged woman. But I find

that just being able to spend time with my partner, Johnathan, does so much for my freaking sanity. Just to have a friend at the end of the day every day who sees you, who cares, who will just laugh with you. My favorite thing in life at the end of the day is just to lay in bed and laugh with Johnathan before I go to bed.

Luvvie: Yes.

Elaine: It just melts off the stress. It reframes everything, puts things in perspective, and waking up with him and being able to ask each other, "What are you grateful for," those things do so much. And I try to work out. I try to do the meditation. I try to do all these other things. But you know what? Those things, I may or may not get to them, but as long as I do those three things, sleep, read my devotional, and spend time with my love, I'm good.

Luvvie: Yes. I love that. Yes, that's it. We got to make sure our cups are not empty. We got to fill our spirit, so even if you ain't got time for no massages and working out, at least you're doing that to fill your spirit so your heart can be full.

Elaine: Exactly. Exactly. Exactly.

Luvvie: I love it.

Elaine: I aspire to a 2.0 self-care regimen, which would include massages once a week on Sundays, working out five days a week. I love doing bar classes and Pilates when I can fit it in. I'm trying to work on this booty, so I'm trying to do some squats daily.

Luvvie: Yeah, the track booty is really important, okay?

Elaine: You know, skinny girls, it's hard out here in these streets, you know what I'm saying?

Luvvie: It's hard. It's hard.

Elaine: But I'm working on it. I'm working on it.

Luvvie: Listen-

Elaine: But, yeah, hopefully ... During the book tour, hopefully I will step up my self-care game because I know, from what I hear from other authors, I'm going to need it.

Luvvie: Yeah, girl, you going to need it. But I'm really thrilled for you, and I am excited-

Elaine: Thank you, boo.

Luvvie: ... that your book is out in the world and people get to see it and read it.

Elaine: Woo!

Luvvie: So, yes, y'all support Elaine. Let's see another Black girl be on the list. Always proud of you and I love you dearly and I'm very, very happy to support anything that you do.

Elaine: Thank you. And y'all, come out to Chicago and see Luvvie onstage with me during my book tour stop.

Luvvie: Yes. June 28th. Come see us in Chicago.

Elaine: It's going to be fun.

Luvvie: It's me and Elaine on a stage. Let's do this.

Elaine: It'll be fun. More of this.

Luvvie: Yes, girl. Yes, girl. So, yes, love you and proud. Proud.

Elaine: I love you. Thank you so much.

Luvvie: Indeed.

Elaine: Proud of you. All right, I'll see you soon. I'll see you in Chicago.

Luvvie: Bye.

Elaine: Bye.

Yo, shout out to Elaine Welteroth for joining me. She is doing so many things on so many levels, author, writer, cultural activist. Y'all, follow her on social media. She is @elainewelteroth on Instagram and Twitter. That's E-L-A-I-N-E-W-E-L-T-E-R-O-T-H. Yo, go show her some love, congratulate her on hitting the New York Times bestselling list, and let her know what this interview gave you in terms of the gems she was dropping.

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