



Rants and Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi

Never Give Up (with Claire Sulmers) - Episode 19

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Yo my peoples. Welcome to Rants and Randomness. I am Luvvie Ajayi, your host and wacky wordsmith. And this is my podcast where I'm talking about the things I'm loving, the things I'm side eyeing, and having great conversation with people who I think are interesting. And I'm here at the Chicago Recording Company bringing y'all the radio voice as always.

On this episode, I'm feeling good about the seats that black people and minority progressives won in the midterm elections. I'm ranting about the people who continue to hustle backwards by voting against their interests and spotlighting [Higher Heights](#), an organization that is doing incredible work. My guest on this show is [Claire Sulmers](#) of the [Fashion Bomb Daily](#).

So, let's jump into it.

Feel Good

[00:00:48]

Yo, so this week I'm feeling good about the seats that black folks and minority progressives won during this really important midterm elections, where we were all biting our nails. For the first time ever, there are over a hundred women with seats in the US House of Representatives. And a lot of people of color won, right? So [Latisha James](#), she is now the first black woman who was elected New York State Attorney General. [Colin Allred](#) won the House seat and unseated an incumbent. He is an ex-NFL player and HUD official. [Antonio Delgado](#) is a Rhodes scholar who focused on universal healthcare and emphasized his working class upbringing. He unseated the incumbent in New York. [Rashida Tlaib](#) and [Ilhan Omar](#) are the first Muslim women to be elected to the US Congress. Yo, Rashida's in Michigan, Ilhan is in Minnesota. She's also the first Somali-American elected to Congress. We have [Jahana Hayes](#), who's the first black woman to be elected to Congress from Connecticut. [Ayanna Pressley](#), first black woman to be elected to Congress from Massachusetts. [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) is the youngest woman ever elected to Congress.

The first Native American women elected to Congress are also here. [Sharice Davids](#), who is an openly gay Native American. She defeated a Republican incumbent and flipped the red seat blue. That is amazing. [Deb Haaland](#) replaces Democratic rep [Michelle Lujan Grisham](#) in New Mexico. [Lauren Underwood](#), 32 year old registered nurse, unseated a four term Republican Congressman in Illinois 14th Congressional District. She is a Democrat from Naperville who was never before been elected to public office. This is huge, okay? And then, y'all listen, [Auntie Maxine Waters](#) easily won her election

and she's set to take over the House Economic Oversight Committee. Y'all, I need her to come for all of Trump's tax returns.

And as of today, which is November 7th at 4 PM, [Stacey Abrams](#) still has not yet conceded that she's lost the governor race in Georgia. That is because it is so close that it might end up being a runoff election. I am hoping that by the time you are listening to this podcast, that the runoff election is official, and that Stacey Abrams is governor of Georgia. Because to be quite honest, if she loses Georgia it's not because she didn't run a great campaign. It's because she was cheated. It's because Brian Kemp stole seats. So honestly, Stacey for me is a winner and even if she does not end up being governor, I'm looking forward to her running this country. Running something major. So, this is not going to be the end for her. Again, the fact that she did not lose in spite of the fact that this guy has been the vote of suppression, the efforts that have been thrown at her, the fact that the President of the United States has said all of this dog whistle about her. Yo, I'm feeling good about it, honestly. So there's a lot of things to celebrate.

And also, 19 black women won their judgeships in a Texas county, Harris County. That's huge. There's things to feel good about. There are some wins. We didn't win Florida, because Florida. [Andrew Gillum](#) lost by a very small margin. And [Beto O'Rourke](#) in Texas lost by a very small margin also. I wish we'd have won that. That would have been amazing feel good. I wish we could say Stacey Abrams clean and clear is governor of Georgia. But there are things that we walked away with. Also, the fact that Democrats now control the House. That's huge! It makes it that much harder for Cheeto Satan to be ridiculous. So, yeah, let's hold on to those pieces of wins.

Rant

[00:04:56]

Okay, so my rant this week is about how white women continue to stay hustling backwards. We've been here before. We have been here before when [Doug Jones](#) election in Alabama and how he won.

He won really on the back of black women. 98% of black women who came out and voted for him because his opponent Roy Moore is a sexual predator. While 63% of white women voted for Roy Moore. And we all lost our minds all over again, because just like in 2016 when 53% of white women voted for Donald Trump, and then 63% of them vote for Roy Moore. When it came down Texas and Beto O'Rourke, and we find out that 59% of white women voted for Ted Cruz, at this point it's not an exception, it's how they do it. It is mind boggling to me that white women continue to vote against their interest.

We keep on saying white women vote against their interests, but then I started to realize that honestly, maybe we're thinking their interests are different. They're not necessarily voting against their interests. I think their interests are that they want to uphold the oppressors in their lives. They want to make sure they're keeping their husbands and their sons and their fathers happy. That's their interests. The proximity to power is their interest. So, when they vote for the Trump's and the Cruz's of the world, this is what is happening.

And each time I'm like, "Yo the absolute Beckery. The audacity of caucacity. How do you continue to make these terrible decisions?" White women have got to do better. These numbers are just awful. I do not understand how you can just give your vote to the person who you think you're beholden to as if when you're in that booth you don't have autonomy. At this point, I realize that nothing is as determined as a desperate white man who feels like he's losing his position in the web of oppression he created. Right? We're clear about that. They will do whatever they can do to stay in power. But nothing is sadder than the woman who is bought into her own subjugation. I expect nothing from white men, but it's also clear that we can't expect much from white women. As black women show out in droves and vote to make sure that we're not putting predators in office and people who don't see us as humans in office, our power is then limited because white women will turn around and go vote for them in droves. For these people who are actively harming them. For the people who don't want them to have agency over their bodies. For the people who would not want them to vote if they had the chance.

It's not a surprise. Every election that basically happens now when the demographic information comes out, it's not that we're surprised that this is how white women are voting. It's just that we always have to state the matter. That here we go. As we all insist that it's our job to fix the world and fix this country. Those of us who are trying to fix this country. Then have to fight against our "sisters", I put this in quotation marks, who actively vote against what makes sense. You know, it's mind boggling to me. It is mind boggling. In Texas, Beto O'Rourke could have won, he absolutely could have won. 59% of white women who voted, voted for the dude who's a sleazebag. Ted Cruz is a sleazebag. He doesn't care about you. He voted against reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act to include provisions for LGBT people and increase ability to prosecute sexual offenders. He voted to confirm Kavanaugh y'all. Right? And he calls the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade a dark anniversary. This is the man that 59% of white women who voted, voted for.

I do not understand how we're constantly talking about feminism, and marching together, and pink pussy hats. We're expected to stand next to people who would just not piss on us if we were on fire. Black women constantly show up. We constantly show up. We constantly vote for harm reduction. But then our votes are then against the women who are so beholden to their own oppression, and so beholden to their own oppressors who are often the men in their lives, that they would do the thing that would actively harm them. Thinking that that proximity to power keeps them safe. It can only keep you just as safe. I think about the story of Beauty and the Beast. Really Beauty had Stockholm Syndrome. Beauty is a story of a lot of these rural white women.

But I don't want us to also think people who vote terribly are just uneducated. There are educated white women who are making these choices when they walk in the booth and decide to cast a ballot for the Ted Cruz's. For the Roy Moore's. For the Donald Trump's. It's not just poor people. It's not just rural white women. There's some people we're sitting across from dinner, at our jobs. A lot of times white women are like, "I don't know any of these women who vote like this". Yes you do. They just haven't admitted it to you. So at this point, listen. Someone said white women are canceled. You know, I like to be nicer, maybe. Maybe not, depending on the day. But I need white women who have sense to, one, understand that you're not that far from the women who are doing this votes. Don't think that

because they haven't told you that they're voting in this way, that they don't exist in your life. They're your friends. They're your moms. They're your aunties. They're the friends you're going to brunch with.

We, as black women, we do our part each and every day in a country that continues to try to step on our necks. We do our parts when we walk in the voting booth. We fight voter suppression. We are like, "You know what? The system does not love us and these people might not fully represent everything that we believe in, but we're going to do this because it's going to get us closer to the greater good". We're the ones who show up in this way. We can't do any much more work than we're doing. We can not do much more. I need my white listeners, people who, I don't know, use logic and reasoning and don't feel beholden to a man's vote. I need you to work on your folks. You got to do this work because that's the only way we can win.

If white women are going to cancel out our votes with their terrible decisions, how do we get to freedom? How do we get to the point where the patriarchy doesn't run everything? And these patriarchy princesses who are committed to not seeing progress, because they think progress means they will somehow suffer more, those are not anybody's sisters because they're not looking out for you. They don't have your best interests in heart, and if the zombie apocalypse comes they will totally sell you down the river. Another election. Another disappointing showing out of white women. White women just have to do better, yo. That's really what it comes down to. White women, I need you to do better.

Randomness Spotlight

[00:12:36]

My spotlight this week is [Higher Heights](#). It's an amazing organization. It is the only national organization that provides black women with a political home, and it's exclusively dedicated to harnessing their power to electing those black women to influence elections and advance progressive policies. It was founded by [Glynda Carr](#) and it is just committed to seeing black women's political powers grow. They've been really instrumental in Stacey Abrams' campaign. And their work includes investing in the next generation of political leaders, organizing and mobilizing the power of black women through their [Black Women Vote campaign](#). And they created an environment for black women to run, win, and lead. So, capacity building. They do online training, research, culture shifting, communications work. On their site you can go on there, you can find resources to identify black women candidates, webinars for your own political readiness, and resources that allow you to support the candidates who are running.

Higher Heights is so important. The work that they're doing, now more than ever you see how instrumental it is. How valuable it is. And their website is [higherheightsforamerica.com](#). I need you to go support them, donate, be informed in what they're doing. Because listen, I am clear that our road to freedom is a road that's led by black women and organizations like Higher Heights. Honestly there's not necessarily organizations like Higher Heights. I think Higher Heights is singular in the work that it's doing. It's very concentrated. And they're building a national strategy to mobilize one million black women in dollars by 2020 to harness our collective economic and voting power. That makes them a singular organization.

So I need you to check out their work. I need you to support them. Follow them on social media, and be a part of this movement to really get black women to lead. To put us in positions that allow us to compete when it's time to run for the offices that we're running. So the feel goods of this week of all those women who won positions in the US Congress and just on a local level, a lot of the work that Higher Heights is doing is part of that. So follow [Higher Heights on Twitter](#). They're Higher Heights. H-I-G-H-E-R H-E-I-G-H-T-S. They're on [Instagram](#). They're on [Facebook](#). Support their work and let's get free.

Interview with Claire Sulmers

[00:15:15]

Luvvie: All right, Rant fam. Join me welcoming Claire Sulmers to the show. Claire, what up?

Claire: Hi Luvvie. How are you?

Luvvie: Oh my goodness. So good to have you on the podcast. Hey girl!

Claire: So good to be here.

Luvvie: So let me give the people your-

Claire: With our very first Bombshell of the Day.

Luvvie: Oh my god!

Claire: Did you tell them that?

Luvvie: Oh we're going to definitely get to that. Oh we go way back. I'm going to give people your bio first. So Claire Sulmers is the founder of [fashionbombdaily.com](#) and the industry's leading fashion blogger, chronicling fascinations of color. Her pioneering work ushered in a new wave of digital journalism that fed and fueled an underserved of African American and Latino style lovers wanting to know more about the brand from the culture. Beyond developing and directing content for Fashion Bomb Daily, Sulmers has done extensive style writing for other platforms including [Vogue Italia](#), Vogue Paris, Essence magazine. Her body of work y'all has garnered her a huge online following that's over one million. And she has been the influencer of choice for major corporate brands who want to reach her audience including Toyota, Reebok, Verizon, and others. In 12 years she has accumulated [over 1.3 million followers](#), written a book called [The Bomb Life](#), and is now working on her second book. Yes Claire! Epic, epic, epic.

Claire: Yes, thank you.

Luvvie: So I like to start my interview by asking my guests, "What did you want to be when you were growing up?"

Claire: It's so interesting. When I was young, I wanted to be an international business woman. And at the time I didn't know what that meant. I just knew that I loved to fly and I didn't know what sort of business I wanted to do. And it's interesting that now I kind of am living my dream. I own my own business and I'm on a plane, I would say, half of the month. So I became what I wanted to be when I was a child.

Luvvie: Yes. And when you were growing up, did your parents kind of support that? How did you basically tell that, "I wanted to do this thing"?

Claire: Okay, so the business thing came way later. I kind of fell into the business, and I was actually speaking to someone today that [Fashion Bomb](#) started off as a hobby. It was just something I did in addition to my daytime job. I was a researcher reporter at a magazine, and I started [Fashion Bomb](#) because I couldn't find a way to break into fashion and so decided to start a blog. And it blew up and just created this whole life that I never ever imagined. So growing up traveling, my dad's a pilot. I don't know a lot of people might not know that but my dad's a pilot. He's been a captain for United since I was two years old. And so we've done a lot of traveling in my day, and just kind of got used to being on a plane from a very young age and knew that that was something that I wanted to do as a grown up.

Luvvie: You went to Harvard. What did you major in there?

Claire: Yes I went to Harvard. I'm actually at the Harvard Club right now. It's kind of crunk up in here. But I majored in French and African American studies, and I did that because my brother went to Harvard also. I actually wanted to go to Columbia because I was just always obsessed with New York. But my brother encouraged me to go to Harvard and he gave me some tips on how to get in. And I took his advice and I got in. And initially I think I probably would have majored in economics or something like that. But he was just like, "Major in whatever you want to major in and a few years later people will just remember that you went to Harvard". And it's true. Now people do ask me why did I pick such a weird major, and I did it just because I love French and I just wanted to learn more about my culture and my background. I grew up going to very kind of predominantly white schools so I just felt like I needed to learn more about my culture and I did that in college.

And it all ended up paying off. It came in handy. [Fashion Bomb](#) does focus, I would say, most of the content on minority or African American audience. And French came in handy because when I couldn't find a way to break into fashion, I ended up quitting my job and moving to Paris. And I was able to find an internship at Paris Vogue, and so my major came in handy then because I was able to speak French fluently and write in French. Everything made sense later on, but at 18 it made zero sense.

Luvvie: Got it. So you said you went to all predominantly white schools. How did you basically maintain your pride in your blackness as you dealt with a lot of all white students?

Claire: You know, my mother is Caribbean. She is from the Bahamas.

Luvvie: Yes.

Claire: And my dad's Haitian. A lot of people know that I'm Haitian too, but my mom always instilled this pride in where I was from. We had pictures around the house of my grandfather. He ran for office in the Bahamas, part of a political party. And so, I always knew where I came from and always had pride in where I came from. And when there were some instances when people wanted to reach out and touch my hair or something, I was just like, "Don't touch me", you know what I mean? But I've always kind of been that girl that will snap back and have been super confident.

But I always wanted to go to public school. I was like, "This sucks". It's not diverse enough from a dating perspective, from a social perspective. It wasn't ideal. I would beg my mother to go to boarding school and all this stuff. And she was like, "Shut up and go to school". And so I went to school, obviously I listened to my mother, very strict. But now I thank her for it because it was a great education. Five kids out of my class ended up going to Harvard. One was another young black woman as well. I had a great education coming up so I had to sacrifice some of that social stuff. But you can always catch up in college. You'll be all right.

Luvvie: Yo, college is a good time. You just recently cut off your locs too. So did you have locs growing up, or did you have permed hair? What was that?

Claire: Right. So, I tried permed hair, maybe, I would say fifth or sixth grade. But for some reason, my school, we had swimming. We were required to learn how to swim. We were required in order to pass P.E. We had to dive off of a high and do a back dive off of a high dive. It was terrifying. So basically, there was no way for me to maintain my permed hair through that whole thing. That torturous moment. But my mom also doesn't really know how to do hair, so we gave up on the perm and I got box braids. So, I had box braids for... You know box braids.

Luvvie: Yes!

Claire: They were hot!

Luvvie: I had them too.

Claire: Yeah, the 90s. Yeah everybody had those. So, I was getting my Janet Jackson, Brandy on. But then I got to college and I didn't want to have to spend money to get my hair rebraided all the time. Or find somebody to do my hair. So, I was like, "I can get locs. It

gives the same look as box braids but it's my own hair". So, I started locs my sophomore year of college and had them up until last year. So, I was comfortable with locs because it's an easy hairstyle. Really, it's easy. I think I had locs... Partly it was my African American studies in me being proud of my natural hair texture, and I don't need to perm my hair and all this stuff. But it was really probably 50%, if not 75%, just laziness and not being able to do my hair. To this day, I don't really know how to do my hair. And having an easy hairstyle that was kind of no muss, no fuss.

And as I got into the fashion industry, they want the blonde and that became my signature. And one Fashion Week, it was last year, last February, I decided to try red and the red did not work out. And I was looking like Fraggles Rock and I was like, "I don't want to do this". Image is such a huge part of it when you work in fashion and you are the face of your brand. And I just wasn't feeling the red and so I cut it off. And since then I've been rocking units. Units, not wigs. But yeah, wigs basically. But units, and having more fun and exploring and it's been fun. I've made some missteps. But I think overall, it's been a fun, new journey. So I'm having fun exploring all the different lengths, and textures, and colors and all that.

Luvvie: Yeah, well your journey to building and running [Fashion Bomb Daily](#) is so interesting, And the amount of things that unfold that I've been watching is dope. So first of all, for people who don't know, back in 2009 when... Was that 2009? Claire used to do these things... You still do though, the Bombshell of the Day or Bombshell of the Week? And I remember-

Claire: Yeah, we still do it.

Luvvie: Yeah so, I remember back then I... Listen I was consuming so much blogging. But yours was one of the main websites that I was reading. [Fashion Bomb Daily](#) always had within an hour of a celebrity at an award show, you guys already had who created the outfit, where people can get a dupe that's cheaper. And then when you started doing Bombshell of the Day I remember you were like, "Hey, submit yourself". And I submitted a picture of myself, and I remember I was wearing a black top. Back then my hair was short, but it was like a copper color. And I sent it in not even thinking anything, and a week later you featured me as a Bombshell of the Day.

Claire: I did, yeah. And you had something, a shoe site maybe?

Luvvie: Yeah.

Claire: Because I remember I found it and I don't think it was Luvvie because... What's your full name?

Luvvie: It was [Awesomely Luvvie](#), but I had a shoe site called [MustLuvvShoes](#).

Claire: [MustLuvvShoes](#).

Luvvie: Yeah!

Claire: That's the name. Or maybe I said Luvvie from Chicago or something like that. But yeah. I remember that. So you were one of our first Bombshells. You were a pioneer, a trailblazer for our Bombshells.

Luvvie: And I remember people hitting me up like, "Oh my God! You've made it. You're on [Fashion Bomb Daily](#)". And I was like, "Yo, this is the dopest thing ever!" You built Fashion Bomb... When did the site start?

Claire: We started in 2006, August 2006.

Luvvie: Oh my God! So, wait a minute. That means [Fashion Bomb Daily](#) and [Awesomely Luvvie](#) started the same month.

Claire: Oh! You started 2006 too?

Luvvie: Yeah.

Claire: Okay, cool. Yes, we are the OG's of the game girl. Holding it down.

Luvvie: Holding it down. How did you come up with the name? What made you decide to start this website?

Claire: So I came up with the name because one of my best friends from high school, whenever something was great, she said it was the bomb.com. And so I was like, "I want to write something about fashion, so Fashionbomb.com". And Fashionbomb.com was not available. Then it's not available now, so I went to fashionbomb.blogspot.com, and then later on we became [Fashion Bomb Daily](#). And why I started it was because I was working as a research reporter at a magazine, trying to break into fashion, trying to work at Vogue. Just trying to live my truth. And everybody at the time was like, "You're not chic". They looked me up and down and just tell me no. I just wasn't breaking into fashion the traditional way.

So I went to Human Resources at my job, thinking that they could help me. And they told me that the first thing I should do is to start a website, which I did, [ClaireSulmers.com](#). But then I felt like [clairesulmers.com](#) wasn't fun enough and it didn't really encompass everything that I loved. So my web designer, he suggested that I start a blog. And I was a little scared because I had a full-time job. At the time there were people who were blogging who were getting fired from their jobs for blogging. And I didn't want to lose my job, but I just decided to start it and I thought about what I wanted to write about.

And I've always loved to shop. I've always been that person creating lists of what I wanted to buy from the mall and stuff. So, I started a fashion blog. And honestly all of 2006 was Shopping Sales with Claire. It was me going to sample sales, and trying to save up for a pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes, and walking down Fifth Avenue and breaking my heel because I was doing a Kimora Lee Simmons walk. And kind of experiencing fashion as a young 20 something in New York. And around 2007 we started to introduce celebrities so I started to talk about trends, and we started to establish the key players in the game. We did [Style Files](#), I called them Style Files, but we talked about the style of Mary J. Blige, and Gabrielle Union, and even Kim Kardashian back in 2007. And then around 2008 we started to incorporate readers, and really started to hit our stride a couple of years later.

Luvvie: What did you think was a tipping point for the website?

Claire: So many things. I was still freelancing for different publications. So, I wrote an article for Essence on some of the top blogs at the time, including Concrete Loop, and Cake and Ice Cream, and Young, Black, and Fabulous. And this article came out, and then I wrote some of the owners of the websites and I was like, "Hey guys, I have a blog also". And so, it kind of ended with the big guys to start off. Not an unfair advantage, but I had a bit of an advantage. So, the first big break was writing fashion for [Young, Black, and Fabulous](#). And I think that was in... I can't remember. I think 2008 was when I started writing some fashion for Young, Black, and Fabulous. Fashion stuff and she would link back to me. But also, back then I was crashing the Baby Phat show, and taking my digital camera and taking video of the final walk. And because I was one of the first bloggers in the room at Fashion Week and one of the first bloggers at Baby Phat, they would link back to me because I was the only person with that content.

So, yeah. I would say the big break was just from being recognized from larger sites and always trying to have that exclusive content that other sites might not have.

Luvvie: When we started blogging, there was really no roadmap on how to do this, how to get the access, how to get the content that mattered. How did you always catch the good content? Basically, where did you get that know how from?

Claire: I was in the industry. I wasn't in the fashion industry, but I was in journalism. And so I had my ear to the stoop. I knew when Fashion Week was. And so even though I didn't have an invite, I would ask around for invites and sometimes I would get a standing room ticket. But sometimes I wouldn't, but I just remember having this insatiable passion and need to be in the room, and I was like, "I will die if I'm not at Fashion Week", basically. And I just found a way. And because I focused on African American designers, there were only a handful. It was the Baby Phat show and the Tracy Reese show. And so I was like, "Let me just focus on those". And I knew people in the industry so I was able to tag along with them or I would know where things were. And I would

kind of just go and feel my way. And then also seeing that, say Concrete Loop, would link back to me... I'm sorry I know it's really loud.

Luvvie: Concrete Loop!

Claire: Yeah, I knew that they would link back to me because I was starting to get a feel of what content would get those new followers and readers back to fashion blog. Sorry, it's loud at the Harvard Club y'all.

Luvvie: It's a lit-uation. One thing again with starting so early is, with no blueprint, when were the times you hit a wall? And what did you do?

Claire: Oh my gosh. So many times. I feel like you keep hitting walls and I think that's something that entrepreneurs don't realize maybe when they're first starting out. Especially when you first start making money. You're like, "This is great", and you think it's going to just continue to happen forever. But I think for a long time we were making most of our income from the website. And then people started to shift from websites to social media, so that's when we hit a wall. We were like, "We're used to getting X amount of revenue", and it's continually decreasing overtime and it can be scary. But then you're like, "Okay. Instagram is here. Everybody is on Instagram. So now we have to make sure that all of our content is on Instagram". It was kind of a hard transition, I think, for some people who started off on websites, because that's where we feel most comfortable. I was used to waking up at 9 AM and first thing I did was put my first post up on Fashion Blog and then just going, going, going until three or five pm.

But continuing to shift your attention to where the customers were and to where the readers were. So, I would probably say the first wall maybe 2014 or 2015 when websites were kind of dying down, and Instagram was dying up. And then we recently had an issue with our Instagram page so we were like, "Instagram, wonderful!"

Luvvie: Yes, actually I want to talk to that. I want to talk about that. So earlier this year, Fashion Bomb Daily's Instagram was taken down and it had a million followers at that point. What happened?

Claire: There's a learning curve. I think that some entertainment sites, like ours, they might screenshot a picture and, say, repost it, not knowing that you have to pay for them. And I think that most times the pictures are okay, but sometimes they're not okay. And we just encountered a photographer and an agency where screenshotting was just not okay. And so they reported our account and we were disabled. But there's a solution. At the end of the day what happens is that photographers, they're seeing that people have a million followers and they're seeing that people basically have their own entertainment site on Instagram, so they're like, "We want a piece of the pie too". And so that's what happened to us. And it's just been a really long road. It's been seven months, and that's been another wall that we hit and something that was unexpected.

But then I'm like, "Okay, the Claire Sulmers brand", which is something that for some reason I never paid too much attention to. It's there and it's strong. So I'm a speaker, I have a story to tell when we testify. I can speak on panels, consulting, events, so many different things that I never thought I might have been capable of in the past. But even that wall with Instagram forced me to kind of step out of my comfort zone a lot and pursue myself as a brand, because at the end of the day maybe Fashion Bomb can be disabled, but they can't disable Claire Sulmers. These are all my pictures. I took all of them. I think it's about always pitching, pivoting, shifting. Just feeling the pulse of what's going on and being able to pivot when necessary.

Luvvie: So I actually want to go back a little bit to that. For a platform to disable your platform that had a million followers on it, first of all, what is the first reaction into what did you do? What did you do?

Claire: The first reaction is hysteria, just confusion, sadness. You reach out to Instagram. I don't know if you or any of your readers have ever tried to reach out to Instagram, but there's no phone number. There's no customer service number. Everybody corresponds through email. You never know when they're going to get back to you. You don't know who the right person to contact is. And for us, we were speaking to a few people in the fashion department and they were like, "Sometimes they were super helpful and sometimes not so much". At the end of the day, they're kind of hands up in the air. Basically Instagram was like, "This person reported you". And so we contacted that person. And then we had to wait for them to respond. So it's just kind of a lot of back and forth, and a lot of waiting, and being on other people's time.

And then you start to think, "We have advertises because we're a publication. And we make our revenue, we pay all of our contributors from advertising". Then there's putting out a lot of fires and people being like, "What happened? I put my ad out there and now it's gone. I paid for 30 ads and now what?" It was a little bit chaotic, I would say, at first. And you go through so many emotions from sadness, to anger, to depression. And then to just peace because I'm spiritual and I'm always like, "If God wanted this to happen, then it was meant to happen. If God wanted it to happen, then maybe it was a good thing". And there's some good things that have happened as a result of this. I had [my first feature on ABC](#) that's coming out soon. I got [my first picture on New York Times Style](#) ever. It's so many great features for me.

And I think a lot of time I've put my brand in front of me and kind of made me hide behind it. I think in any business, too, it's important to diversify and have as many different streams of revenue as possible. So we started to focus more on e-commerce. We started to focus on me as a speaker, consultations. There's just so many different things that we can do and not just put all our eggs in one basket.

Luvvie: And I always talk about how one of these lessons from being locked out of my own account on Facebook a couple years ago, is understanding that some of these platforms are walled gardens that teach us over and over again that we don't own it.

Claire: Exactly.

Luvvie: How has this changed your business model?

Claire: I'm always super hopeful that we can get it back. Then once we do get it back, then I'm like, "Okay we need a way that we can own our audience". Whether it's having a newsletter, or having an app, or just having something where we don't have to rely on Instagram 100%. And so these are all things that we're exploring. Just building up something so that, worst case scenario, we don't lose access to all these followers that honestly it took us years to get. We started a backup page and it's going really well. Cardi B's shouted us out, and Kim Kardashian's liking our pictures. But it's 10,000 a month. Which, for some, is great, but do the math. It's going to take a long time to get back to 1.4 million. I think it's just as important to have a strong brand. We still have our events, that are well attended. We still have our [website](#). We still have [Facebook](#). So I think just try to be present in as many places as possible, but try to find a way to own your audience.

Luvvie: Makes perfect sense. So, people see you looking fierce and fabulous all the time. What do you think is the biggest misconception folks have about you or your work?

Claire: It's really interesting that you ask me that. Social media is what we want people to see. Nobody sees me at home in my pajamas with no unit on my head. Or nobody sees the tears. Nobody sees the mayhem and that's something that for me is important not to show. For one, I just don't feel as if I show people it's totally chaotic, and everything is imploding, will people have sympathy or will they judge me? I don't know. But at the end of the day it's important for me to just continue to be positive, and continue to inspire people. And what I'm going through, I hope also inspires people just to show that having a positive attitude is key. Just going back to business as usual is key. And also learning ways to just deal with hard times. Hard times can manifest in so many different ways. When you think about people having diseases, or dying, or anything, there are real issues in the world that people can deal with. And when you think about losing an Instagram page it pales in comparison to something like that.

But how do you deal with adversity? Do you throw up your hands and cry? Or do you rant and rave? Or do you just get to work? And I hope I'm showing people that I get to work. I am always doing something. Now I'm booked almost every weekend, whether I'm speaking in Miami or having events in Atlanta. I'm busy and I'm going hard because I'm not going to give up. That's just not how I'm built. And I'm not going to complain because that's just not what I do. So hopefully people who watch me can see that I'm a fighter, and as my profile says, I will not lose. But it's not always peachy and I think that

that's a huge misconception about social media. I don't ever show the hard times and I never really talk about it, but they're there. But I just choose to focus on all the good stuff.

Luvvie: How do you balance that though? How do you balance the whole living authentically and creating this really glamorous public figure? Do you ever have the moments where you're like, "You know what, I just do not have it today".

Claire: Oh yeah. I don't update as much as I should to Claire Sulmers and if I'm not feeling it, then I'm not doing it. And I'm not the type to just have a photo shoot just for the sake of having a photo shoot. When I take pictures it's because I'm going somewhere and doing something. So if I'm not going somewhere or doing anything then I'm not posting. I have talked about some of what I'm going through on Claire Sulmers, but it's always with a positive twist. And I tell my story and I tell people what I'm going through, but I guess in my own way. And that's how I stay authentic. Just by doing me all the time, capturing it beautifully hopefully. Allowing some moments of vulnerability but never ever quitting.

Luvvie: If you were to do something else today, what do you think that would be?

Claire: That's a good question. Sometimes, honestly, I want to just throw up my hands and be like, "You know what fashion blogs? We've had a really good run. It's been 12 years. You're causing me all sorts of grief, and how about I just throw up the deuces?" It's happened before. We've seen it with Nicole Richie. We've seen it with Concrete Loop. A lot of the people that I named are no longer around. Because we've been doing it for so long, and this really is a grind. So, I think I would just focus on the Claire Sulmers brand. We have [Convos with Claire](#). We actually have an event coming up, our last one of the year, December 1st in New York. I'm [looking into doing my own podcast](#). You're gold Luvvie. You're gold. I'm like, "I just have to start". That's the hard part, just starting. And honestly, you know Myleik who is another-

Luvvie: I love her.

Claire: ... girl crush of mine. She said that you have to prioritize what pays you the most when you think about how you're going to structure your day. And right now, honestly, me speaking, and doing consultations and all of that, pays more than Fashion Bomb. So really it's like I'm holding onto it for dear life. And I feel like Fashion Bomb is important to our community, I just feel that way. But I think today I would just drop Fashion Bomb and just keep doing me. But I don't think I'm ready to let her go yet.

Luvvie: Honestly, the evolution of our work is interesting. I'm fascinated by what especially the OG's are going to do next because, to be quite honest, I see less of us blogging now. So I'm curious to find out what those of us that have been at this for 15 years, are really about to do moving forward. So I'm always interested. I'm looking forward to the fact that you're doing a podcast.

Claire: Now we're experts. We're experts at this. We're blogging experts. We're social media experts. We can use our expertise to tell others how to do it. We're at the point... We were starting out. We were kind of feeling things out. And now we know what to do. We know how to galvanize a group of people and keep them interested and entertained, so we're turning into the teacher. And I think that that's probably the next step, us offering all this knowledge whether it's even html... It's so crazy the little things that I've learned over the years from html, Photoshop. I could put together a collage if I needed to, move letters, all these different things that you can do. So I think teaching, and podcasts, and even TV and speaking, and all that, that's probably the next step for us. I'm so committed to Fashion Bomb. I just want to make sure that it's good if I ever leave her. Before I do, I want to make sure she's good.

Luvvie: Would you ever sell it?

Claire: You know what? I would. Or I would just work with someone who can help us scale. I think there's so many other examples of websites like [Refinery29](#), just for example. There's so many examples of websites who have received injections of funds, and been able to scale and do things that they would really like to. And that is honestly the dream for me. To find an investor so that we can do things. You can bootstrap it, and you can mom-and-pop it 12 years. But there's a certain point when an injection of capital is really what we need to take things to the next level. [Refinery29](#), they rescued \$50 million in funds. Imagine if we had even one percent of that.

Luvvie: I think that's possible. Especially now that business is going beyond the bootstrapping it. Now folks are seeing people like [Nicole and Shea Moisture](#). So, I'm always curious what my guests do to take care of themselves as they're doing all of this and dominating the world. What is your self-care must do?

Claire: So I try to wake up at 5 AM in the morning. This is the hardest thing that I have ever endeavored to do, but it's something I try to do. If I manage to wake up at 5 AM, that gives me time, three hours, for self care. So normally, its 5:00-6:00 I run or walk. By 6:00 I'm at Starbucks getting a coffee because I need it to stay up. And then probably for the other two hours I'm listening to [Les Brown](#), or [Tony Robbins](#), or [Mel Robbins](#), or reading, or meditating, or just something where I'm taking care of my mind and my spirit, so that's something I try to do. Sometimes I fall off, 5 AM is hard. Its really hard. But that's what I try to do. And of course, every Sunday dialing into [T.D. Jakes with his livestream](#) is important. For me it's a lot. It doesn't work for everybody, but I love to listen to motivational speakers. Les Brown is my favorite, but it could be [Oprah](#). It could be Tony Robbins. It could be [Deepak Chopra](#). It could be anyone, but I think it's important to get your mind right.

And then also making time for friends, which is something I don't do as much as I would like. But I try to make time for friends and family because I noticed that in these moments... It's interesting, [Nichole Lynel](#) she is another woman crush of mine. Nichole

Lynel, but she was talking about how back in the day she didn't have as many followers and people treated her differently. And I noticed that a little bit. Not badly, but people started to act a little differently minus the one million followers. But the people who are always consistent with me are friends and family. So I just always have to make sure that I don't neglect those relationships because at the end of the day, they knew me before Fashion Bomb. They're going to be here after, and they're my source of strength if all were to fall down.

Luvvie: I wish I could do the whole meditating thing. I haven't nailed it yet. Any tips on that?

Claire: Okay, so I was listening to Debbie, another who I'm obsessed with, and he said he started meditating. How he did it was with a 15 minute meditation. So Deepak actually has a 21 day 15 minute meditation. So it's really quick and he kind of walks you through it. He talks for maybe five minutes, and then the rest of it is music. I honestly always fall asleep. I don't know if you're supposed to do that. But it's definitely like a lullaby that I'm like, "Okay, let me take a nap now". The 15 minute one by Deepak, the guided meditation, always helped me.

Luvvie: See I'm afraid I would fall asleep too. I am afraid of truly-

Claire: No I don't think it's a bad thing to fall asleep. I don't know if there are rules to meditation. I'm not an expert and I started meditating just this year. But for me, meditation is about being relaxed and kind of getting your mind on a greater vision. Or a greater feel for the world and just understanding that God is in control at the end of the day. And as long as you do the right thing and try to do things with a pure heart, and a great spirit, and with good energy. Always express gratitude, always express love, don't envy. Just the basics, the basics. I think it's good, and as long as you leave any meditation session with a good grounded feeling I think that it's done its work.

Luvvie: Got it. I'm going to give it some more tries. What do you do to pamper yourself?

Claire: I haven't pampered myself enough, okay, I'm doing okay. I love a good facial. I love a good massage, but I haven't had a facial in quite some time. So I guess just getting my nails done, mani/pedi. Honestly part of my job is to get pampered. Like today, I got my makeup done and my hair done. I take that for granted sometimes, how much I get that done. I get it done for work, like I'm going to an event later today, but I guess those are the little things that I do. Makeup and hair done, nails and toes, and those are some of the ways that I pamper myself.

Luvvie: Are you a massage girl?

Claire: I love a good massage. Honestly, okay, I had a bunion, I had bunion surgery. And I am looking for the best foot massage. I still haven't found the best foot massage because most times when I get a massage people get down to the bunion and they're like, "Oh

no I don't want to touch it!" And I'm like, "No! I want you to knead it. Knead it like dough". But I love a good massage, facials, honestly, especially with how much I wear makeup. I probably wear a full face of makeup at least two or three times a week. So facials are relaxing and a good way to unwind.

Luvvie: And what are you using to clean your face? What's the cleanser of choice since you're wearing makeup so often?

Claire: CeraVe. [CeraVe Foaming Facial Cleanser](#). Are you familiar with that?

Luvvie: That's a drugstore brand, right?

Claire: Yeah I only use drugstore brands, honestly.

Luvvie: Nice.

Claire: My friend got me [La Mer hand Creme](#) once.

Luvvie: La Mer is so expensive. La Mer is like \$500.

Claire: Yeah, the little pot she got me was \$200. So, she got it for me for Christmas, and then I got it one other time and then I was like, "Forget this". I'm not spending \$200. And honestly, I feel like with the melanin we don't really need all that. My mom washes her face with Dove soap at night. I don't even know if she uses a special moisturizer on her face and she looks stunning. I actually use [Urban Skin Rx](#). They have this even tone lotion, because what happens is I wear the makeup, I might get a pimple or something, and I like to pop things. So I'll get a bit of scarring, but I use the even [tone moisturizer from Urban Skin Rx](#) and it actually works really well.

Luvvie: You know, black mommas don't do anything but use regular soap that they find wherever and regular lotion.

Claire: Yeah! She doesn't care.

Luvvie: I called myself buying my mom some Vitamin C serum. She ain't use that. I'm like, "Give it back. That's expensive".

Claire: Exactly. My mom does not care at all.

Luvvie: And they look good.

Claire: And she's so simple.

Luvvie: They look good.

Claire: She looks great. So we don't have to do too much.

Luvvie: See? I'm with it. I'm with it. Well I'm really really appreciative of the fact that you came on Rant. Super excited to see what you're up to next and this podcast that you're going to do. All right?

Claire: Yes! And Luvvie, let me tell you something, okay? I am so proud of you. You are out here killing it. Since your first Bombshell entry, I've just been watching you just kill it. You are killing it. And so I'm super proud of you. And thank you for having me on Rants and Randomness.

Luvvie: No, thank you for coming on it.

Claire: I'm honored.

Luvvie: It's really cool to look to the side and see the people who have been here all along. And I'm just really cheering everybody on, and you on, and I see the hard work that you do. So I just have nothing but respect for it.

Claire: Thank you, thank you. And any of your New Yorkers, they should come out to [Convos with Claire](#) December first. And I'm working on my second book. It's actually a retrospective on [Fashion Blog Daily](#). That's why I know what year we started doing celebrities, and what year we did this because we're kind of doing a throwback to everything we've done, and then we'll see about all we're going to do in the future.

Luvvie: So you're telling the story of the whole site?

Claire: The story of Fashion Bomb, yeah.

Luvvie: When is it going to come out?

Claire: That is a good question. I honestly wanted it to come out in December, but you know how writing a book is. It's a struggle. Every day, I'm like, "I know I should be writing this book, but 90 Day Fiance is more interesting". No, I'm kidding. I'm working on it now. It'll be-

Luvvie: So basically people should look out for it in 2019?

Claire: Yes. 2019, yeah.

Luvvie: All right. So where should people follow you online?

Claire: You can follow me [@ClaireSulmers](#), at [@ConvosWithClaire](#), [@TheBombLife](#), also [Fashion Bomb Daily.com](#) and our page will be back [@FashionBombDaily](#). So, keep an eye out for that. We will be back soon guys.

Luvvie: All right. Bet. Appreciate you. I'll holler at you on the internet.

Claire: All right. Thank you.

Luvvie: Bye.

Claire: All right. Bye

Yo, shout out to Claire Sulmers for joining me on this episode. Please follow her on social media. She has all of the social medias. Her personal Instagram is [@clairesulmers](#). @ C-L-A-I-R-E S-U-L-M-E-R-S. You can currently follow Fashion Bomb's backup Instagram as they work on getting the main one up. And that Instagram is [@fashionbombdailymag](#). So Fashion Bomb Daily Mag. All right? She has three other ones. Those two will lead you to the other ones. Claire is not playing with y'all.

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