



## Rants and Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi

Get It Done (with Karleen Roy) - Episode 24

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My peoples welcome to Rants and Randomness. I'm Luvvie Ajayi and this is my podcast, where I'm talking about the things I'm loving, things I am giving side-eye to and having great conversation with people who I think are dope. 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 love I got from the [last episode I did with Yvette Noel-Schure](#). I am ranting about men who don't know that they take up too much space and spotlighting the [Luvvletter](#) and [Jesus and Jollof](#), which is back. I'm showing y'all some love with some spotlights and interviewing the incredible [Karleen Roy](#) of [The Vanity Group](#).

So let's jump into it. It's going to be a good show.

### Feel Good

[00:00:46]

So, I'm feeling good about all the love that the last episode that I did has been getting on social media. [LuvvNation](#) has been giving all the props to [Yvette Noel-Schure](#), who is a publicist extraordinaire, mom, media mover, who's worked with icons from Prince, Mariah Carey and Beyonce for the last two decades. And it's awesome because I knew the interview was one of my favorite interviews yet and to get y'all's affirmation about it has been dope. And you guys also took on my call to action of making sure that you showing her love on social and she's felt it. She's like, "Oh my God, I'm obsessed." I love to bring y'all interviews with people who I really admire. And I think that interview was kind of the perfect merge of both story and lessons and Yvette is such a dope woman and y'all got to actually see and feel her heart through the mic.

So all the love the podcast has been getting I'm actually share a couple of the notes I got about that interview in particular. Okay, so somebody said, "That [interview with Yvette Noel-Schure](#) was the best and most emotional and most inspiring and moving interview I've ever heard. She is more than everything." Yes, she is. A bunch of y'all have been tweeting and Instagramming about how you were crying because Yvette was basically strumming your pain with her fingers and speaking to your life. And the part that resonated with a lot of people the most was when she said, "Grief is a thief." So, yeah, keep showing her love, keep showing this podcast love and we'll keep bringing you the dope stuff.

### Rant

[00:02:35]

All right. So my rant this week is about men who take up too much space, aren't told that they take up too much space and basically trying to still shine. So what happened is the Grammys happened, right? [Cardi B](#) won the best rap album of the year and she's the first woman to ever win it. She's worked very hard to establish a name, a career, community, awards, money and clout. And Cardi's actually become somebody who people have

started to respect more for her thoughts on politics, on culture. Because beyond the high pitch voice and the bright hair, she's actually really intelligent.

So when she wins this award, one, I think it's crazy that it took this long for a woman to win best rap album. But she wins the award and Offset, her husband, comes on stage with her, which is not bad, right? I don't have a problem with her husband accompanying her on stage and her... I mean, they've worked together before, so I get it, right? My problem was that he was in her shot the whole time. As in he was never more than a foot away from her. So as she's speaking, as they're taking pictures, they're probably no pictures of her on that stage accepting her award without Offset in it.

And my thing is, I think his constant centering of himself during Cardi's biggest moments is trash. And I need people to stop cheering him on about it and I need people to stop cheering on people who don't respect the boundaries of others. I don't think it's romantic. So here's the thing, is if let's say he's her manager and he did that, I'd still have a problem with this. I'd be like, "Yo, why is her manager standing in her literal shadow while she's getting the biggest award of her career this far?"

So a bunch of folks were like, "Well, that's her husband and she wanted him up there and it's their prerogative. That's how you show support." And I want to push back on that because him being her husband, Offset being Cardi's husband and being on stage was not the issue. I think the issue a lot of people had is that he is constantly doing these things where he interrupts really big moments of her career for his own purposes, right? So there was a Rolling Loud Festival where she was headlining and it was I think a week after it came out that he was cheating on her, he interrupted this historic performance of hers to beg her to take him back. Which that was not romantic. That is not healthy love to do that because that is not your moment.

Do that backstage, do that in a place where she can make a decision that's not peer pressured because people are watching her as she's on the stage and you are showing up trying to do this grand gesture of love. I think it's weird. Maybe I wouldn't feel some type of way about it about the Grammys, about him constantly being next to her if that Rolling Loud piece hadn't happened. But here's the thing, as I was talking about that part of the Grammys and how he seems to be an attention whore, he drops a video of her giving birth to announce his album. So everybody who was like, "Well, that's her husband, he's supporting her." How do you say... What happens there?

How does that make sense for you to use a very personal and private moment to promote your album? All of that, those three acts together for me speaks to somebody who's narcissistic, who controls and who does not realize that he's taken up too much space. And here's the thing, men aren't told that they take up too much space in our world, women are constantly told we take up too much space. We're told that we need to be smaller than we are. We're told, "Hey, don't be so aggressive in the meeting. Hey, your voice should be a little bit higher, so it's not showing too much authority."

When men take up too much space they are not told this. I felt like Offset was taking up too much space and folks was like, "Well, y'all just don't know what it's like to be married." I think there's a thin line between life partner and co-dependence partner. I don't think marriage involves constantly trying to be in every important moment of your partner. You can be a part of the moment, as in you're present as they're receiving awards, you're supporting them in the tough times. But it doesn't necessarily mean I have to stick to you body-wise like glue to where there are no pictures that exist in your biggest moments that is just you, not you and your partner.

I just really wonder what that says about us and what that says about what we believe our rights are, right? Because here's the thing, is I know Cardi might have wanted him up there, but what if she didn't? What if she did it because she realized if she didn't have him up there there'd be a problem. But what if she actually did want him up there and did want him right next to her because she didn't really know how to be truly celebrated by herself? I think a lot of times we're given the pressure of making sure that we're massaging our partners egos and making sure we can give credit. We can say, "This person was instrumental in my career. This person was instrumental in my life," without having them be an acute part of the celebration that's supposed to be about us.

As I talked about this people were just like, "People got to mind their business." Here's the thing, is that was a cultural moment. This is not about necessarily commenting on somebody's marriage as much as commenting on somebody's cultural moment. Because when you win a Grammy, that is a huge cultural moment. When a dude, whoever he is, however he plays roles to you is literally in your light as you are accepting this award, it is a cultural moment and we can comment about it. I'm not outraged, but I do think it's something for us to pause and see what we enable in this society that doesn't already celebrate women enough. So in the moments when we get these accolades, I think we need to really cheer on women and make sure that we have full spotlight.

And again, I say that even if Cardi wanted him up there, I think he should have had the sense to be like, "You know what? Babe, I'm here for you, but I'mma step two steps back or to the left so you can have this full moment for yourself." You know what I mean? I think it's not like Cardi goes up there anytime Migos wins awards, that doesn't happen. I feel like next time Migos wins an award, she needs to go up there and be pulling his locks as he's talking. But yeah, I just think people need to know when to play your role, like fall back, let people have their full moments. But I think it's a man thing. Women, think about how many rappers and musicians and actors have won awards. How many times have their wives been standing literally in their lights as they accept this award? It doesn't happen that often.

So, however way their love goes, that's great, but I think we ultimately need to let men know that they need to excuse themselves more often because they're so used to being given permission to take up space, even if the space is not theirs. That when it's really not theirs, they don't belong there. So, I know some people would disagree with like, "Well, he just... She wanted him there and that's her husband." Let's just say we'll agree to disagree and I want us to be more self-aware about the space that we take up. And I want us to also give ourselves permission to be fully celebrated without necessarily having to include other people in our moments.

Yeah, congrats to Cardi. This is a dope moment for her and I'm looking forward to seeing how her career goes, how she grows as a public figure and the influence that she starts to really wield. And honestly, I still want a Cardi B anchored news show. Because after her a video about the government shutdown, I was like, "I'd totally be here for a show about what's going on in the world that Cardi anchors." I want to hear her thoughts, I want to hear what she thinks we should do. Because I think it'd be way more fascinating than these dude bros in these buttoned-up black suits. But yeah, ultimately my rant is, yo men, take up less space. Women, let's celebrate each other and ourselves unapologetically.

## Randomness Spotlight

[00:11:35]

So I'm spotlighting my [Luvvletter](#) this week. So the [Luvvletter](#) is a newsletter that I have where I talk about what I'm doing in the world, where I'mma show up, where spotlight Live Nation, which is y'all, those who read my

work, who listen to my podcasts, who just consume my content. And the [Luvvletter](#), I had been a delinquent about it in the last six months and I hadn't really done a lot of them because I'd been too busy. But I'm relaunching the [Luvvletter](#), okay? I really did a giveaway in there at the end of the year to kick it off to kind of get me back in the groove of sending it out. And it's essentially my way of staying connected with my audience outside of social media. Because here's the thing is we cannot build our businesses and our work just in these walled gardens.

And if Twitter decides to delete my account today, if Facebook decides to delete my account today or lock me out, if Instagram decided to just blow up, I still want to be able to reach the people who consume my work, who read my stuff and who give me love. So the [Luvvletters](#), the why I do that. And in the face of what's happening in culture and what's happening in tech, understanding that we need to have ownership of our own spaces. So it's an important piece of my work, which is why I would love to have y'all make sure you subscribe to the [Luvvletter](#). How you do that. You go to [luvvletter.com](#) which is L-U-V-V L-E-T-T-E-R.dot com. And one of the things that I'm going to start doing in every edition of the [Luvvletter](#) is I'm going to be sending out my recommendations of products that I'm loving.

How I do spotlights on this podcast is because I am a person who just loves to talk about the things that she enjoys, either using, listening to, buying, wearing. And it's just one of those things that I do naturally and the Loveless will start having a buy Black section because I want to make sure I'm encouraging those who support my work to also support other Black businesses. Because I think it's really important, especially now when we constantly see brands disrespect us and show that they're really not here for us. But I make it a kind of a lifestyle choice to support Black businesses because why not if we don't do it, if we're not intentional about it, who is going to be, how do we compete in a world that doesn't cheer for us?

So that's going to be a big part of the [Luvvletter](#) moving forward. So if you sign up, go to [Luvvletter.com](#) you also will get a link to my [Afrobeats](#) playlists. For those of you who don't know, Afrobeats is a West African pop music and it's what I listen to outside of '90s, R and B the most. So I made an [Afrobeats](#) playlist that has eight hours with the songs. And if you sign up for my [Luvvletter](#), you get an instant link via your email that gives you access to the playlist on Apple music and Spotify. Let me tell you, it's the jam. Somebody actually messaged me and said their daughter learned how to crawl while listening to my [Afrobeats](#) playlists.

So yeah, man, that's the spotlight. Join the [Luvvletter](#), be a huge part in [LuvvNation](#) and I'm going to be announcing some things that I'm launching in there. First, people who have subscribed to the [Luvvletter](#), will have first dibs to a couple of dope things that are coming up. You don't want to miss it. So go ahead and sign up y'all. It's [luvvletter.com](#) that's L-U-V-V L-E-T-T-E-R.dot com.

Rants fam, join me in welcoming [Karleen Roy](#) to the show. Karleen.

## Interview with Karleen Roy

[00:15:16]

Karleen: Hey ya'll!

Luvvie: Your bio is crazy.

Karleen: Is it? I'm humbled.

Luvvie: So people know you're epicness. I actually have to cut down Karleen's bio cause I was like, "I can't even fit all this stuff. [Karleen Roy](#) is as extraordinary as the events that she creates. She produces bespoke events and luxury experiences of unsurpassed excellence for luminaries, trendsetters, and today's brightest stars. Like some of your favorite celebrities. After graduating from Howard University, the Memphis native came to New York in 2004 armed with nothing but ambition and a dream.

She quickly landed a job in the publicity department at Island Def Jam Recordings. She was recruited first by R&B artists, Neo to oversee the day-to-day operations of his management company and later by Sean Diddy Combs who brought Karleen on as a senior executive assistant at Bad Boy Entertainment. The confidence, expertise and international connections Karleen developed over the course of her career, inspired her in 2011 to strike out on her own to form [The Vanity Group](#). It quickly became the firm of choice of a variety of corporate clients and A list celebrities. I'm talking Justin Bieber, Kobe Bryant, Cardi B, DJ Khaled. Karleen and her staff of luxury lifestyle curators understand the needs of high profile individuals and the no excuses work ethic they expect.

She is just like the person who creates the events of your dreams and you need to realize you had the dream until Karleen created the, you're like, yup, that was it. She's been featured in [Forbes](#), [Vogue](#), InStyle and other national publications. Her and her stellar team at [The Vanity Group](#) specialize in clients who demand the very best. Karleen brings the magic when nothing else will do. Yo, Karleen, thank you for joining me.

Karleen: Of course, I was not going to miss this. I was so looking forward to it. Is this still happening? Because I'm like super hype and I've charged my phone so let's get to it.

Luvvie: Let's do it.

Karleen: I'm super excited. Thank you for asking me to be on the show.

Luvvie: Oh, I had to, your work is so good. I been in Karleen's DMs like girl yes. As she's talking about her events I be like, yes. I just sent her random emojis and long exclamation points.

Karleen: I need it, I need it. Yes, encourage it, encouraged it. I need it. So I looked at all of that. I love it.

Luvvie: We see it. So what did you want to be when you were growing up?

Karleen: Oh my God, I wanted to be a hairstylist.

Luvvie: Really?

Karleen: My grandmother was a hairstylist. She used to do like Tina Turner's hair and she did everybody's hair in the neighborhood and I wanted to be a hairstylist. And then you grow up and most young people, you want to be whatever you hear in school. "I want to be a doctor, I want to be a lawyer, I want to be a teacher." Because for most people those are the only careers you know or that you really see. You don't know if anything exists outside of this. So it wasn't until I graduated from college and actually live life until I realized, Oh, what I wanted to make a career

in. My dad always says, "You're going to go through several jobs before you realize what job you want to make your career. So-

Luvvie: So were you ever the girl who was like doing hair in the neighborhood?

Karleen: No, I was wanting to do hair when I was like seven years old. I want to be a hairstylist doing my own hair because my grandma was a hairstylist so I can't even braid. Whenever I have a daughter, she's going to be out the game. I can maybe do like two cute ponytails, but I can't even give her the flat rate. So, no, I wasn't the girl doing hair in college, in the dorm room charges \$20. I stopped my wishes of being a hairstylist, probably about 12 years old.

Luvvie: Oh, see, I can't braid either. So that was never an option for me. I don't know what it is about flatbraids.

Luvvie: So when you were in college, what was your major?

Karleen: Oh my God. So this is where it gets good. So in high school I decided I want to go to college and be a doctor. I want to be a dermatologist. It's about beauty. It's about making people pretty. It's about making sure your skin is flawless, all these things. So I'm thinking I'm going to school to be pre-med major. Silly me, silly me. The first Math and Science class, I was like, "Oh, you gotta do all this shit. Oh no, I'm not doing this. I'm not cut out for it." And I didn't enjoy it. And I learned it was a pinnacle moment because I learned very early in life was this is not making me happy. It sounds good to say I'm going to higher university to be pre-med. But I actually think it's whack because I don't really want to do this. So yeah, I was pre-med earlier on.

Luvvie: Oh girl, you're talking to a fellow failed pre-med major person.

Karleen: Well why do you think that is? And a lot of people experienced that. Is because we don't know what other careers are out there?

Luvvie: It's because when we're smart, people say you should be a doctor just because you're smart. I think that's a lot of it. I know there's at least three, four [inaudible 00:20:27] that person. There's so many of us who were failed pre-med major folks. So when, when you were like nah, I'm off off this, what did you switch to?

Karleen: So I said I'm not doing this and I just did not have a major for a long time. And it actually was my senior year in college, I took a Sociology class and I was like, "Oh I actually love the study of this." And then I was watching Sex in the City one day back in the day when it was still on air. And I saw Samantha Jones and I saw this woman, she was powerful. She wore beautiful clothes, she was witty, she lived this super magical life in New York city.

And I remember turning to my girlfriend like, "Oh my God, what does this woman do on this TV show?" And she says, "She's a publicist." and I literally the next day went in like, "Okay, I want to minor and like public relations." And they were like, "You're going to have to stay an extra year because you haven't done anything with this." So I literally was a super senior. I was in college five years because I picked up this minor and I wanted to be an entertainment publicist when I

got out of college. And that is what led me to New York and what led me to getting my job at Def Jam.

Luvvie: So growing up in Memphis, did you feel supported in whatever dreams that you would have?

Karleen: Absolutely, I had the best parents in the world. They're polar opposites. My mom was a principal at a performance and creative arts high school. So my mom was all about the art and exploring and dance and all these things. My father was a businessman, had a business and Black enterprise, all these things. So my dad was like, if it don't make dollars, it don't make sense. That's all he could focus on. But even as they were polar opposites they just let me explore and let me do whatever I wanted to do. So I had a lot of independence as a child. I had a lot of confidence as a child just because my parents were able to just let me live and figure it out. And I wasn't afraid to just explore as a young child.

Luvvie: So I'm sure this came in handy when you had to move to New York in 2014.

Karleen: Oh my God, so, okay, I'm from Memphis right? Going to Howard was traumatic enough for my parents. So I call them like, "Yo, so guess what? I'm moving to New York to be an unpaid intern at a record label with rappers and I'm going to drive a U-haul truck and go to New York." And my dad was like, "You're crazy, you just want to get killed like on-

Luvvie: Not cute.

Karleen: Law and Order. I've been watching Law and Order SVU, all these terrible things are going to happen to you." So it was traumatic for my parents. I was just fearless. But you know what, over time if people are not in line, they will get in line. And now my mom is my biggest fan.

Luvvie: Oh my God. And y'all have like group chats that you'd be putting on Instagram?

Karleen: We have group chats. My mom loves the emojis, she's very hip. She knows all the slang words, so because she worked in at high school, she's forever young. So she's the mom you want to have on your side.

Luvvie: All right, so you started being an unpaid. How do you survive being an unpaid intern in New York city?

Karleen: I don't know. I asked myself this question all the time. When I first moved to New York, I slept on my friend's couch for like six, eight months. Slept on couches, my mom was secretly sending money in the mail and I would survive off that. And then until my credit cards got maxed all the way up. But I was just being very creative and trying not to spend a lot of money.

Luvvie: So what was that internship like? What were you had to do?

Karleen: It was amazing. Any young person out there, the best experience you can get in life, especially if you want to work in music or entertainment I would say is to be an intern or an assistant because if you are smart and if you are sharp, these are going to be relationships that last a lifetime and these are going to be people who you're meeting on the ground up. It's going to

support you forever and ever. I loved being an intern at Def Jam. I was there early. I stayed late at night, I was working in the publicity department, so it's something I went to school with. So I really enjoyed what I was doing because I studied it in school and it's so funny Luvvie because the people I met then, that was maybe what, 14, 15 years ago. These are people that I am still working with now to this day.

They're now clients of mine. They championed me and championed the baby group just because I was a good intern, so I tell people, "Don't treat your internship like it ain't shit because you're not getting paid. If you play your cards right. These people who are giving you an opportunity, they're going to be rocking with you for the rest of your career.

Luvvie: See, I feel like this is clutch because as somebody who's gone through so many assistants, I just feel like there's something missing with people not understanding what it takes to do this job that does not seem like glory.

Karleen: No, they don't. They don't understand it at all because you know what? You have to have a mindset that fights with the status quo. Most people live lives going through the status quo, going through life. "Oh, if I'm not getting paid, I'm not doing it." If I can't see the gold at the end of the rainbow right in my face, I don't have enough faith to push my sleeves up and keep going. That's the breaking between people who succeed and people who just want to live a mediocre life. I never wanted to live a mediocre life. That's why I never had a problem. I just want to go balls to the wall and get it.

Luvvie: Yo, so you started doing, so you're going from the internship and then you start with Diddy.

Karleen: Yeah, so there was some time in between that.

Luvvie: People remember Diddy as a dude who made people go to like Junior's Cheesecake?

Karleen: Yes. So after Def Jam I worked for Neo on the management side. I worked at Sony Music. I worked at Violator Management and it was at Violators that I got introduced to Puff because Chris Lighty, who has since passed away, Chris was managing Puff and he was like, "We can't afford you here cause we don't have any openings right now. But my client, Puff Daddy is looking for an assistant. So I literally happened to be right place and right time and after rounds and rounds of interviews I got the job.

Luvvie: What was the most important thing you learned in working with somebody like Diddy who's incredibly... he demands excellence and demands your best?

Karleen: Puff is brilliant. He is, I don't think he gets the credit for being as brilliant as he is. I would say one thing I learned from him and I'm experiencing now is he really modeled what it was to be a young Black book. And I say that because when you think of... people think of a boss, you think of this old white man. The old white man, he sits behind a desk, he wears a suit. You can be innovative, you can be loud, you can be intense, you can be passionate and you can still lead a team of champions who want to win. So I never thought that I was going to go into business for myself when I worked for Puff, that was never my goal. But I'm so happy that I was able to be



there because he showed me like how to be a boss and how to lead a team. I don't think I would've got that experience or access in any place though. He's the King of that.

Luvvie: So then if you didn't think you were going to own your own company, what was the trigger? What made you start [The Vanity Group](#)?

Karleen: That is interesting. I got to a point at bad boy and I absolutely loved my job there, but I was wondering in the back of my mind, "What is next?" I was in a very lucky position to be there. So I'm thinking, "You don't work for someone as iconic as Puff and then go work in a cubicle someplace or you just don't go back to like doing some regular schmegular shit, you gotta really boss all the way up."

So when I was trying to figure out what my next move is, I was getting hit with a lot of different opportunities. A lot of people wanted to hire me. A lot of companies were coming after me and I would be looking at these opportunities like I don't think that's it. I don't know why, but this is not the opportunity or this is not the door I should be going in. So while I'm doing this Luvvie, the money that I had saved up literally only \$2,000. What was I thinking? I wasn't thinking. The little money that I had saved up after I resigned from my job. I was like, "I need to start doing something so that I can live."

And the world and God is so funny. At that very moment people started hitting me to do things for them. "Hey, I'm a random artist. I want to do a party tomorrow in Paris or it's the Grammy's and I want to do a red carpet event tomorrow or I'm stuck in central pay and I need to get a helicopter to Ibiza in two seconds." So after a year or two of that, it dawned on me like, "This is a business." And that actually was the birth of what Vanity Group is now.

Luvvie: So wait-

Karleen: It all very organically.

Luvvie: You getting these crazy requests, right? What made people know you can deliver those?

Karleen: I had the blueprint because I worked for Mr. Combs. He's known as the hardest working man in the show business and it was like, "Yo, if this girl can work for him and excel at her job and do it so well for so long and he has a reputation of getting shit done." My reputation just started to precede me in a very positive way. So we work in a business where it's all about referrals and those who've known the people on the inside know like, "Yo, this is the person you need for X, Y and Z." So just my community and network back to the insurance and every other job I had, my network just started to expand and I became known as this girl who could get shit done under miraculous pressure and succeed at it.

Luvvie: You're basically the Olivia Pope of events.

Karleen: 100%

Luvvie: Yo so-

Karleen: 100%, 100%. I tell people [The Vanity Group](#) is not a traditional event company by any means. It's not traditional for the people that we work with. It's not traditional for the requests we get and it's not traditional because we're doing everything at such a fast pace. Like most companies, they're probably doing these projects with like a six month lead time. We're doing it in six days.

Luvvie: Wow. Really like you planning full scale events in six days.

Karleen: Full scale, full scale, lights, camera, action, huge budgets, huge requests in six days and we get it done. And I have to give credit to myself because it's just a mindset of like, "we can do this, we can get this done. We just gonna stay up a little later, we're just going to get in a little bit early. We just have to want to win and want to work hard."

Luvvie: I love that you just said, "I want to give credit to myself." I love that, I love that. Oh my goodness.

Karleen: Did you see Snoop excessive speech when he got his star on the Hollywood walk of fame?

Luvvie: No.

Karleen: Luvvie you have to see it. It is so iconic. He was like, "I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank me for not giving up when I thought shit was about to be fucked up. I want to thank me for having faith." It's like when you are a business owner, you are the vision and the heartbeat of the company. If I was to give up, if I thought a project was too hard or I thought we couldn't do it, that's a trickle down effect to my team members. So I have to be able to lead and lead with confidence so that we could get the job done.

Luvvie: That's real, that's real. The top is what matters and your brand is synonymous with excellence, imagination and wonder. I think-

Karleen: Luvvie, can you be a secret copywriter for me? It's just your vocabulary is so amazing.

Luvvie: Karl, anytime you need, but you don't need me. You have this amazing team that just be coming up with stuff and your work. So in case y'all don't know, Karleen and [The Vanity Group](#) planned, [Cardi B's baby shower](#). When I tell you I literally was watching Instastories as this thing was going down, like how does she just get a full train car inside a building? Can you talk, what is your secret to these grand things?

Karleen: Oh my God. What is my secret? I have a big imagination. I think it's a gift and a curse because it's so big that I'm not able to turn it down or turn it off because I'm a dreamer and I'm a natural dreamer. So I'm curious and always curious to know how things can get done. So if you're a dreamer and you can partner with great artisans or great fabricators or great builders. So again, push them to get it done, things get done. I think a lot of shit would get done in people's lives if they just were less afraid to push it.

Yeah. We'll sound cute like, "Oh yeah, we should do a subway. She is from the Bronx." You can have that idea go in one ear and out the other. But I was like, "no, really? How can we get

someone to build it?" And where was her stop she came off of everyday coming to and from just her daily life? But let's keep digging, let's keep digging with big names.

Luvvie: Do you ever hear no?

Karleen: No from who? The clients?

Luvvie: In general.

Karleen: We don't get a lot of nos as far as who we work with at [The Vanity Group](#) because it's a blessing that we get to work with people who completely trust us and give us free rein to do whatever. I don't know if we were working with big brands who have a lot of tape to go through and we would have the same luxury and freedom. So from an artistic and creative standpoint, from the work you see with us, we're able to do what we want. That's why I love what [The Vanity Group](#) is because we're blessed to just like do what we want and our clients show up and love us. So we don't hear no in that respect. But in my day to day life as a business owner and operations, I may not hear no a lot, but do get roadblocks a lot and it's like, okay, how do we get past this roadblock from a business operation standpoint? And I think that's naturally what comes with when you are growing a business.

Luvvie: I think a lot of people see the glitz and the glamour behind your work. They see you. They see you doing Rick Ross's birthday party. What is the biggest misconception folks have about the work that you do?

Karleen: I think it's exactly what you just said. I think people think that my life is hanging out with artists and celebrities all day and we show up and it's kicks and giggles and we're onto the next. I don't know if people really understand that. Yes, that is what we're doing, but when the lights go down at the event, we still have to come back to the office and we still have to work. I have to have several conversations with our HR and operations person to figure out X, Y, and Z and how can I do better at developing my employees. I just hired a finance director because I was getting overwhelmed with just paying bills all day and I stopped myself and I had to have a come to Jesus with myself and say, "Karleen, you didn't start [The Vanity Group](#) to become the company controller. You need to pay someone to do that."

So now I have to be okay with letting that money go to pay someone to relieve me so that I can actually create. Because I can't create and I can't produce from the HR, the bookkeeper, the finance director and the controller. So I don't think people understand that I still am running a business and developing a team all while doing the sexy shit. And that is a lot of times why I go ghost on Instagram. I'm trying to do better at posting more consistently, but it's like, "Oh shit, I'm deep in something else and neglecting to just post and keep up because it is very difficult running a business." I think I even underestimated myself.

Luvvie: What do you think is the hardest part about running a business?

Karleen: Being a boss. It is very difficult. And you see things on Instagram, boss lives, boss babe, but it is very difficult. I can control a lot of things, but I cannot control people's behavior. I can't control people's mindset. I can try to lead them. I can try to encourage them to get them resources. But

ultimately people make their own decisions and sometimes their decisions will impact you and impact your business. So being a boss has been a very difficult position for me to get in. I made tons of mistakes and as hard as the mistakes are in the moment, they are so often because I always say, how else would I learn not to do this if I never experienced this? So not the peak the cliché, but every loss is a win because now you know, "I will never do that shit ever again or this was a better way to do X, Y and Z."

I want to give a shout-out to Miley because she has been a great sister. I would say she's my sister in business cause she's someone that I can call on and bounce ideas off of. She's really great with giving me resources and things to read just so I can be sharper and it's almost like she was like, "I walked down this road before, so let me tell you what not to do so that you don't make these mistakes." But yeah, being a boss is very difficult.

Luvvie: Yeah. I call Miley too.

Karleen: But I embrace it, I embraced it. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

Luvvie: I mean if your boss is over here wearing the dopest sweatsuits and sneakers, it makes going to work a little bit easier because you can show up as yourself.

Karleen: That's what I'm saying. I mean Luvvie just moved to New York and just come here to five, once a week. I tell them that yes, I am a maniac of a boss. I am the first to say that, but it's like what better way to spend your days and spend your hours at such a unique organization where you can grow, where you can be creative, where you can feel like yourself. We can talk and explain. We can understand each other and still produce excellence. I think it's nothing better.

Luvvie: Yeah. I think being a young Black woman who runs a pretty powerful company, you essentially are showing the example and you crafted a business out of something you didn't see. I would say, have you ever wanted to be like, You know what, I'm in the wrong place? Or have you ever went to quit in the middle of something?

Karleen: I have, every day I wonder how did I get here? Like this was never the plan or I didn't even see it when I originally thought it in my head. So I always think like, "Oh God, how did I get here?" But I never feel like, "Should I stop?" I get frustrated a lot with the operations of things and it's not so much how I stopped. I'm always thinking strategically like what's my next move or what's my next play so that I can save it or so that I can get over this hurdle. I spend a lot of times thinking and plotting.

Luvvie: So adulthood is hard, right?

Karleen: Oh my God, I don't know what we were thinking when you're in college like, "I can't wait to get out of school." Whenever I sit down with interns and they're like, I can't wait to graduate and get a real job at work. I'm like, girl, this is a time where you should be living your best life, spending your parents money, getting drunk, dancing with your girlfriends. There is no reason to be excited to be a grownup. It sucks but I absolutely love it. I feel the most confident that I've ever felt in my life now just because I'm a bit wiser and am sharper. I love growing up is just always learning about yourself.

Luvvie: I mean, it also helps that you're literally doing the thing that you have the gift for.

Karleen: It's amazing.

Luvvie: It's actually kind of crazy. I'm honestly always inspired just by watching your work because it shows that you can be an adult who can play in work.

Karleen: You can play at work if you play your cards right. Again, if you're smart and you the same thing Luvvie you created a career and a brand around doing something that you love and it's based off of you, I think it's nothing better in the world. More people could have that life if they were unafraid.

Luvvie: So when you are not in the room, what do you want people to be saying about you?

Karleen: Oh, I love that when I'm not in the room and what people are saying about me, I hope they are saying that she is a leader. I hope people are saying that they respect me for the work that I'm doing. We had a conversation in the office about who wants to be famous. And I was like, I don't know about wanting to be famous, but I do want to be known for doing great quality work. And hopefully this work turns into a legacy that people would remember that I had a hand in.

Luvvie: I mean, listen-

Karleen: I think there's nothing worse than leaving the world and no one knows you were here. People are going to know you were here because you wrote a book that's gonna live forever. I want to hopefully whatever I'm doing that I'm creating.

Luvvie: I'm ready for you to write a book. But that's separate.

Karleen: Right, but you know what, It's you're a writer, you're a speaker, you're using your mind, that's gonna live forever. And that's part of your legacy. So I'm hoping that whatever we are doing over here and sometimes in a moment we don't even know what it is that it's creating a legacy.

Luvvie: Yeah. And I think it will because again like some of your work is the type that even though it might be... it's funny, your work is temporary but permanent at the same time. Like you create memories for people even though the card doesn't exist anymore, that you got built, you built the memory for it. How do you build your own memories as you're doing somebody else's, as you make other people's dreams come true. How are you making yours outside of work?

Karleen: I love that question Luvvie. You are just off the dome or you have notes?

Luvvie: A lot of them are off the dome. It's just, I'm like, "Let's see where this conversation takes us."

Karleen: You're right, one thing about events that I don't like is that she said it's temporary. It happens and then it goes away. That's why I started to go to school for design. Because how can I make this live forever? But I think the legacy that what I'm enjoying about doing the event is the relationships that I am developing, the life lessons that I am learning in that moment for whatever we're doing, whatever the challenges, whatever the hurdle that we are jumping over,

everything is a learning experience for me. We did an event for Quavo not too long ago and I was like, Oh, I've become a Broadway producer and I didn't even know it. So I'm never too old to learn. And there's no job that's too big or too small that you can't learn from.

Luvvie: So what are your dreams?

Karleen: What are my dreams? My dream is that [The Vanity Group](#) continues to grow. We hear this word all the time, scale, scale. Are you trying to scale your business? Are you trying to scale your business? I'm like, we're not in the season of scaly, but we are in the season of growth. And so just developing awesome workers, everybody who works for me, our young Black women and that is by design of us being able to.

Luvvie: First of all, come on. Okay. Thank you for that.

Karleen: And that is by design. I don't know any other company... I think very little companies exist where you have Black leaders and a Black team and you're able to do awesome dope things. So I love just being able to give an opportunity to other young ladies who look like me because maybe this type of company didn't exist when I was coming in the business. So I want to be able to be face and be a resource of opportunity for young Black girls who want to get their foot in the door and do events like this.

Another dream of mine Luvvie, I'm hoping that the Van group grows so big and we can have a million people working here so that I can enjoy life a little more. You know what I always say, this work life balance. I have work life balance because I'm the boss, which means I can come and go as I please and do what I want. But when we get to a place where we have a bigger team where I can really stop and smell the roses, that would be awesome.

Luvvie: Honestly, I feel like that is when we have really built things, things that can run without us being there day to day. We all got to work on-

Karleen: I don't need to be checking my email on... if I'm on vacation, why am I checking my email about work? I want to be able to completely let go. I'm not there yet but that would be the dream where I can just pop in and make sure this shit has been done and then go back to where I need to go back. That would be the dream.

Luvvie: That is when you are chairwoman of [The Vanity Group](#).

Karleen: Okay, I mean I am. I'm chairman, chairwoman but also we are a small company so I still need to be involved in my presence and energy and vision needs to be felt. But hopefully one day I can be in the Hamptons drinking wine and looking out over the sunset. That would be the dream.

Luvvie: Look, living your best life. Okay, your best boujee Black life.

Karleen: Yes. All of that. That would be the goal.

Luvvie: I still want to call out the fact that you have this company that is just all Black women. Because it kills me whenever I see Black women at the top of a company and most of the people who work for them are not Black. I'm always like, "How girl, how. What?"

Karleen: This is by design. I'm trying to empower the next generation. It would be remiss of me to not give an opportunity or give the knowledge or the gym to the next generation of girls that look like me. And you've maybe have heard this before. When you hear people talk about Black business like, "That's a Black business, you know how they do." I don't want that to be the connotation of my company. And I don't want that to be the connotation of any Black company. Why can't our businesses be, when you think of Black businesses you think of success, that is why I'm trying to raise the next generation of. I tell the girls in my office, you all should be mini executives, whatever you're over right now you should be the leader of this shit. You should own it. That is what I'm trying to grow here in spirit.

Luvvie: And I think y'all actually are doing it because people already know if [The Vanity Group](#) is behind it, listen, it's going to be crazy because I went to my leaks retreat last year and I'm coming back this year.

Karleen: Me too.

Luvvie: Are we going to have a good time in Mexico?

Karleen: Yes.

Luvvie: And just the small details. And I was just like, "It speaks so highly of who you are." Type A personality Of course. Type A, but what does it take to work for you? Because I know you're also hiring you're always hiring.

Karleen: I'm always hiring. What does it take to work for me? You must be smart. Common sense. I don't care if you got all the straight A's in school, if you were in all the AP classes. I'm looking for people who are intelligent and confidence and you'd be surprised how many people are not. So I'm looking for people who are intelligent and smart. That's first and foremost. I also am looking for people who have the entrepreneurial mindset, not someone who was another business owner coming to work for me. That won't work, but entrepreneurial in spirit, which means they're taking ownership of what they're doing and taking ownership of the company they work for. Because when you take ownership of something, you're working a bit more passionately because you're understanding the bigger picture.

I don't know if you have that same feeling and emotion at work. If you're working for a huge corporation, I'm making this up [inaudible 00:52:11] or a Coca Cola or a Core Rock. The company feels so bad that maybe you don't really take pride in what you're doing because you don't see the results of it. So I'm always looking for people who have an entrepreneurial mindset because I feel like those employees have a deeper heart. They work a little harder.

Luvvie: Dope. And y'all should follow Karleen's [Instagram](#) because she'd be dropping in there when she's hiring, but listen, don't half step. Like I said on your Insta live, I was like, "You got to be unfuckwithable to work with Karleen." Like don't half step. Don't embarrass yourself, okay.

Karleen: Don't do it.

Luvvie: I'm trying to tell these people-

Karleen: And I actually... we need to get some shirts made that says that. But that goes back to being confident about the fucking work that you do. We should feel like nobody can do it better.

Luvvie: That's it. So as you're doing all of this world dominating and running everybody's events, what are you doing to take care of yourself?

Karleen: Oh my God, I just started meditating and it actually is so awesome. So Luvvie, I used to wake up in the morning and that would be filled with so much stress. I don't know if you've ever felt like this. I would wake up and instantly have a jolt of feeling like anxious or feeling intense. And I felt like I was setting up my day for failure because I was already like waking up and like this hasty rush. So waking up and being still has helped me tremendously.

And I've just started this maybe in December. I was very late to just waking up and sitting and meditating and not grabbing my phone and not just rushing because it was just putting me in a very intense mindset all day. And I'm high off life just in general. I can't be high off life and intense. It's awful. It's just this girl is like a beef 24/7. So that has helped me turning myself off. I just discovered do not disturb. Did you know about this?

Luvvie: Yes, yes.

Karleen: I was so late to the game. I now have do not disturb on my phone in the evenings because that's one way that I can also turn off. And I have a great spiritual network and I try to work out. But I learned the hard way that I have to carve out time and space for myself.

Luvvie: After these great events, how do you decompress though? Do you go to the spa, do you just disappear?

Karleen: Oh my God, we call it event coma. Like the day after we finished events, no one talks because everyone's dead literally in the bed. You've given your all like literally the day after events I stay at home or wherever city we're in and I like lay in the hotel and just rest my legs. Because we're literally up. I'm making this up, If we're loading in at 6:00 AM in the morning, a party's not over till four or five in the morning, we've up all day. So it takes me a good two, three days to recover. It's like the worst life hangover. That does not just go away. So I really have to turn off after events.

Luvvie: And you're traveling a lot. So what do you do to make sure your skin is not getting dry?

Karleen: I travel with all these oils. So when I get on an airplane, I don't wear makeup. I put on oils on my face and I'm sitting there and looking like I just dropped my face in Vaseline. I don't care, I have no shame. Those people on the airplane do not know me, Okay? So I'm sitting there in oils. My sister bought me a... what do you call it? The decompression socks and all these things. So and drinking water you... people always joke like I'm just trying to grow out my edges and drink



water and have my skin glow. But if you want all those things, you actually have to put forth the effort to do it. So I do my part.

Luvvie: And you got lush edges, so clearly it's working. Karleen got some good edges.

Karleen: Good old oils.

Luvvie: All the oil. I've been traveling with face mask now and-

Karleen: Really?

Luvvie: Yeah, absolutely. If I'm not in my hotel, if I have a shoot the next day or something like that, I just use one of those sachets of... I've been using one called Ethiopian honey. Oh girl, get your face back. Yes.

Karleen: I never had... I've literally just wrote it down on a notebook.

Luvvie: Yes, you need it because when you're in a hotel room, you can carry you with you. It's not going to make your luggage heavy and you slather it on the day before an event for 15 minutes, rinse it off and your face is like, "Praise God." In fact, I'm going to send you a bunch of the package because you just put it in your suitcase. You throw in your bag, use it when it gets to your hotel room for 10 minutes while you working, rinse off your face.

Karleen: I need that.

Luvvie: Oh yeah, I got you.

Karleen: I need that. Yeah. I'm all about oil. I'm all about cocoa butter. I am all into all that. And you know what, the older I'm getting the more drier your skin naturally get. So even if I'm sitting in the house and I'm on a couch watching Law and Order, I have a mask on my face, oil. I'm like, massaging my feet, I'm trying to get all that in. But you know what, if we leave such a fast life, we'll just be going, going and never stop and be like, "Oh I should've moisturized."

Luvvie: Look, I'm telling you we can't be out here with the dry faces, people taking too many pictures of us.

Karleen: No, we got to be-

Luvvie: I was like, "I can't be-"

Karleen: ... Black.

Luvvie: "Can't be ashy."

Luvvie: And honestly all this plane that we be on actually does age us. So-

Karleen: Yes, it does. And I don't enjoy traveling as much as I used to and I feel like I'm on a plane every other week because it is draining and it takes a toll on your body. So any girls, young women who are out there and starting to pick up their travel game, make sure that you are preparing yourself for that so that you're keeping up your best health and wellness.

Luvvie: So what are your three travel must haves?

Karleen: Three travel must haves, I always keep some sort of mister spray. I get all different type of brands. I don't have a favorite one, but you can get them from the Sephora or Target or Mario Badescu. But some sort of like rosewater spray or spray to wake up your face after you lay on it. Because you know what you lay in your face just feels so tight, but that definitely helps bring your face back to life. Also when I travel, I put a lip mask on my face and I can't even remember the brand.

Luvvie: Laneige.

Karleen: I can't remember the brand, but-

Luvvie: Is it Laneige? Is it in a little pink oval container?

Karleen: Oh no, I'm going to have to look and my bag is clear across the room, but I got it from Ulta and it is life-changing for me. And I also travel with an eyemask so that I can really go to sleep. I do not believe in working on airplanes.

Luvvie: Same.

Karleen: So I'm never like, "What's the WI-FI?" And when people be breaking up their computers, working on budgets and all that. Because I know the moment I hit the ground, wherever I'm going, I'm going to be on and popping. So that being on the airplane is my time to relax. I don't work on airplanes.

Luvvie: Agreed. I use that time to nap.

Karleen: Me too or read if can't go to sleep, yeah.

Luvvie: Or read. Oh, no, I nap.

Karleen: Yeah, I definitely keep an eye mask because if you have an eye mask on, no one is going to talk to you. You could be asleep and someone is going to tap you on the shoulder. But eye mask means do not disturb.

Luvvie: It's the plane version of do not disturb.

Karleen: Yes, completely.

Luvvie: Yo Karleen, thank you so much for coming on Rants and dropping some of these gems on peoples.

Karleen: It was such an honor to be here. I loved your work Luvvie and I love [the podcast with Lisa Price](#). I listened to her. She has such a dynamic story. I didn't even know about the writing and the writing history and all that. So every time I listened to your podcast I'm learning something new about someone else. I'm just happy that you even asked me to be on his honor so I'm excited.

Luvvie: This podcast is nice to use to get people who I love on the phone for 45 minutes. Okay?

It's a great excuse for it, so thank you so much. I think this is going to be amazing and folks follow Karleen Roy on Instagram. I'll let people know about TVG's Instagram and all that good stuff and I'll probably see you next week at all the events that's happening around Oscars.

Karleen: Yes, you will probably bump into me I'm sure in the next two weeks in someplace with all these red carpet events happening. I'm sure we'll see each other.

Luvvie: I'll be like, "Karleen, I see you out here working hard."

Karleen: You'll see me running around looking like a maniac.

Luvvie: Making the work happen. You are much appreciated.

Karleen: Okay. I'm so happy for this and I can't wait to hear this whenever it goes far.

Luvvie: Alright man. Thanks boo, talk to you later.

Karleen: Awesome. Bye Luvvie, thank you. Bye.

Yo, shout out to [Karleen Roy](#) for joining me, she is epic. And y'all follow her on social media. She's at Karleen Roy on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). That's K-A-R-L-E-N R-O-Y. Follow her company at The Vanity Group on [Instagram](#). That is at T-H-E V-A-N-I-T-Y G-R-O-U-P. They do epic stuff, they show behind the scenes of their work and it's just really good to follow them. Much love to Chicago Recording Company for partnering with me on this. Subscribe to Rants and Randomness if you're not already, on Apple podcasts, Spotify, SoundCloud, wherever you prefer to get it, and please rate it. If you leave a comment, you just might be featured on the show.

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