



Rants & Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi

Step Toward Your Destiny (with Tiwa Savage) - Episode 46

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My people, welcome to Rants and Randomness, I'm your host, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, New York Times best selling author, speaker, and professional troublemaker. I'm here to share dope conversations that will give you something to think about, help you smile, and feel empowered to do the thing that feels hard. Let's get into it.

Today I'm talking to Tiwa Savage, if you don't know Tiwa you're about to fall in love with her and her music. In addition to her amazing studio albums, she cowrote and sang "Keys To The Kingdom" from *The Lion King: The Gift* and *Black is King*. You all saw her in that visual album. And her fourth studio album *Celia* just dropped last Friday, August 28th, and it's amazing. During our conversation, we talk about the importance of her mom's voice in her life, in her career. We talk about how tough the music industry is, we have a conversation about how she moved to London and basically how that changed her life.

Before we jump into this interview, I want to make sure the Rants Fam knows that my new book, *Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual* comes out March 2nd, 2021. It's [available for preorder right now](#). I wrote this book because I realized everything is great in my life. I wrote this book because I realized everything great in my life has come as a result of me choosing to be a professional troublemaker. From feeling afraid and choosing to do the scary thing anyway, that is what has spurred me forward. We don't need to make ourselves fearless, we need to learn to fight the fear and imposter syndrome we feel and use it as fuel to become better versions of ourselves. The things that I'm talking about in this book will take you from being a fear-hider to being a fear-fighter, and heaven knows we got a lot of things that bring up fear right now. To preorder, go to professionaltroublemakerbook.com to learn more, grab the links to preorder. It's everywhere books are sold. Thank you in advance.

Conversation with Tiwa Savage

[00:02:00]

LUVVIE Rants Fam, I am so excited to be talking to Tiwa Savage on Rants. A little background, some of you all already know her, Tiwa is Nigeria's female pop star Afrobeats queen with over two decades as a performer, songwriter, and 11 million followers on Instagram. Tiwa is an absolutely unstoppable talent. She's worked with all the big names during her career, she's the first African female artist to sell out London's IndigO2 venue, and by the time you'll be listening to this episode, her new album, *Celia*, will have just dropped, so make sure you pick it up. If her new single with Sam Smith called "[Temptation](#)" does not get you moving, there might be something

wrong with you. You saw her in Beyonce's [Black is King](#) visual album. Tiwa is everything, so let's get started. Tiwa, what's up?

TIWA What's up, my sister? Remember when we first met a few years ago, I think it was in New York, I don't know if you remember.

LUVVIE It was at Janelle Monae's event.

TIWA Yes. I was just, when I found out you guys are Nigerian, I was just quiet, I was just looking like, oh my goodness, this is amazing. Just seeing powerful women of color in one room was just so, that was actually really, really beautiful for me to see that day.

LUVVIE That was three year ago, three or four years ago.

TIWA Yeah.

LUVVIE Oh my God. It was so empowering.

TIWA Yes, it was.

LUVVIE I'm always curious to find out from people, what did you want to be when you were growing up? What was little Tiwa saying she was going to be.

TIWA I definitely wanted to go into music or entertainment or something. I used to dance, I used to do role plays, I had imaginary friends, I used to pretend I was a princess. I knew I was going to go in this field, it wasn't until I was maybe 11, 12 that I knew it was specifically music.

LUVVIE How did your parents react when you first said you wanted to be a musician? You know how Nigerian parents are, they always want us to be doctor, lawyer, attorney. Right? Engineer, architect. When you were like, "Mom, Dad, I want to be a singer." How did they react?

TIWA My mom said, "That's nice, you can be in the choir." I was like, "No, Mom, like a pop star, that kind of thing." My dad was just like, "No." My dad was like, "Pick one, lawyer, doctor, engineer, accountant." I'm sorry. He gave me the choice of doing the typical things that African parents tell you to do. My mom was just like, "You know what, if she really wants to go into music, I'm going to support her." That's why I named this album [Celia](#), just to pay homage to her. Without her, I definitely, definitely wouldn't be doing this today.

LUVVIE Yo, that's actually amazing. Your mom is a revolutionary, because to be an African mom, to be like, "I'm going to support my daughter as a singer," that in itself is a revolution.

TIWA Like you said, back then, all my aunts are like, "You're crazy, which husband is going to marry a singer? How much money is she going to make? She'll be out all night, performing on stage, who will look after her kids?" It was all these things she said to my mom, she was still like, "No, if she wants to go into music, I'm not going to stop her. In fact, I'm going to encourage her." She would give me money to go to rehearsals, to go to shows, she helped me when I got a scholarship to go

to Berklee College of Music, she would send me extra money for tuition, for accommodation and stuff like that. She's a strong, strong African woman to do that for me. She's strong.

LUVVIE That is incredible, that is honestly incredible and that is game changing because thinking about how much that pushed you forward and how you might not be Tiwa Savage if it wasn't for her. How was growing up? Where did you grow up, are you a Lagos girl?

TIWA Yes, I was born in Lagos, and I stayed here til I was about 11. Then I moved to London.

LUVVIE Where did you go after that?

TIWA I went to London, and that was a terrible experience at first. When my mom told me we're moving to London, I was, see, you couldn't tell me anything in my class. I was like, "Eh, me, I'm leaving this Africa. I'm going to be abroad, I'm going to London." I was excited, and then when I got there and I got to school, and I was bullied, they're like, "Look at you, foo-foo, booty scratcher, Africa..." I was just like, I remember crying every day to my mom, like, "I want to go back." I was really traumatized growing up, I was ashamed. I'll be honest with you, I was ashamed to be African when I was in London. I remember I used to lie to people that I was Jamaican, and my mom would show up at school, her parent teacher meeting, she'd show up in [inaudible 00:08:56] I'd be like, "Mom..."

LUVVIE Why? You're like, "Why, Mom?"

TIWA Yeah, you could have just worn a dress. Okay? No one would know I'm African if you just wore a dress. I would get teased, so now to see how much live the continent is getting, just through music, through fashion, through movies, just in general, just to see the Black Panther movement, to see the [Black is King](#) from Beyonce, just to see how [inaudible], David, yourself, and just to now see Africans in diaspora rising up, supporting African music, and they're proud of their heritage, it's a blessing for us to live in this time. It really is.

LUVVIE I, like you, we moved to the US when I was nine. Me too, they didn't even tell me, they said they were going on vacation, me. I didn't realize we were staying until they actually enrolled me in school, and I was like, "Oh, so we're not going back to Nigeria." When, what happened? I didn't even say goodbye to my best friend. I know exactly how you feel, because the moment I walked in class I knew I was too different. I knew that Ifeoluwa Ajayi was not an accepted name in that room. It's not going to work on me at all, no. These kids are not going to be able to say my name.

TIWA My kids are going to mess it up. They're going to be like... [inaudible 00:10:18]? You'll be like...

LUVVIE That would be if they got it right.

TIWA Just say Ifa.

LUVVIE Exactly. That's why I was like, you know what, I scrapped it. I said, don't even call me Ifeoluwa. Don't even, so I stopped going by it. I went by Luvette, because that's what my aunt used to call me, and then Luvvie. I instantly knew it was too different, and I remember that time of, you

know how I lost my accent, I would listen to my classmates speak and I would be like, "I can talk like that."

TIWA Shut up.

LUVVIE That's how I lost my accent, by the time high school started, most of my Nigerian accent was gone. I was listening, I'd be like, "I can do that, I think I can sound like that."

TIWA What? Wow.

LUVVIE That's how my accent got lost. I definitely feel you on how being African was not cool. It wasn't cool.

TIWA That's the lie.

LUVVIE Now to see it?

TIWA That's the lie that was just instilled in so many people, and I'm also glad with how the Black Lives Matter, the movement, it's really for us to teach ourselves that there's no difference, this is the time where Caribbeans, Haitians, Africans, Black British, African American, just drop that title and just know that we are all African. That's how we're all going to unite and just make, be a powerful force. We've all been lied to, that we're different, and we're not. You can tell from our music, our food, our culture, it's in us and that's why it's important for us to reunite. Not just with our African brothers and sisters in the diaspora, but our Haitian brothers, our Jamaican brothers, everyone across the globe.

LUVVIE It's time, it is time. Back to you moving to London, that is a fascinating story. You ended up singing backup vocals for a bunch of folks.

TIWA Yes, yes.

LUVVIE Drop some names.

TIWA Oh, wow. I did George Michael, may his soul rest in peace, the last Whitney Houston album, may her soul rest in peace, I have backup vocal credits, I did backup for Mary J. Blige.

LUVVIE What?

TIWA Baby Spice from Spice Girls, Blu Cantrell.

LUVVIE Oh my God, so you basically, there's some people who they end up in this historic moment or end up being tied to these historic people, so we need to basically be doing six degrees of Tiwa Savage at this point. You did George Michael?

TIWA Yeah, that was so amazing because when I wanted to go into music, by the way, the way I got into music was so random, I was in high school and like I said, I was teased a lot. Obviously, even

in the midst of being teased as a young girl, I had a crush on a guy. How do you have time to have a crush when they're flushing your head down the toilet ever day?

LUVVIE Right.

TIWA I have a crush on this guy, he used to take music classes after school and he was hanging around the musicians, so I went to the teacher and I was like, "I want to do music, I want to take part in the next Sound of Music play." He was like, "All the parts are gone." I was like, "I don't care." He's like, "Well, we have a trombone section, a horn section." The last instrument is this big old trombone and I was carrying this trombone, I was getting beat up all the time because it was taking so much space. Long story short, I went back to my teacher and I was like, "I can't play the trombone, but I think I can sing." He allowed me to audition, and he was like, "Wow."

LUVVIE You blew him away.

TIWA Yeah, then everybody became my friend. I saw the guy a few years ago, and I was like, "Thank God that didn't work out."

LUVVIE Jesus saves us from ourselves, okay?

TIWA You did not age well.

LUVVIE That is amazing payback, okay? The way my petty's set up, I'd be like, okay.

TIWA From there I just started getting gigs, locally people were like, "There's this new African girl, she has a great voice." I just started performing in local bars and stuff, I just started getting gigs from then.

LUVVIE You ended up also now doing business administration?

TIWA Yeah, because my dad, remember I told you my dad gave me five options, so business and accounts, I ended up going to school to do business and accounts. When I finished, I gave him his certificate and I said, "I don't know whether you need to roll a joint with it, but I'm done with it."

LUVVIE Not roll a joint.

TIWA I don't know what you need to do with it, but this is your certificate and I'm done.

LUVVIE Don't ask me for nothing else, I did that one thing you told me to do. Now, I'm going to do what I want to do.

TIWA Right.

LUVVIE Goals

TIWA [crosstalk 00:14:58], "Go Tiwa, go."

LUVVIE Your mom is lit, okay? Your mom is lit. I'm here for her, okay? I need us to know more about your mom one day, so I'm glad that this album is named after this. People don't realize this, but you were on the UK edition of X Factor.

TIWA Why'd you have to bring that up? That's so terrible.

LUVVIE I got to know all the tea, I got to know all the tea. You signed a publishing deal from it, didn't you?

TIWA Afterwards, I came back to the States and I started writing for people, then I got a Sony TV publishing deal. Yeah, I was in X Factor.

LUVVIE You're like, "Oh no." You were writing songs for artists like Babyface, Fantasia, Monica, again, six degrees of Tiwa Savage.

TIWA Yeah.

LUVVIE How did you actually end up learning the song writing piece of it all? At this point, you're self-taught as a musician.

TIWA Yes, yes. Well, yes, exactly. After graduating from Berklee then, I moved to New York and I was going into studios, I'm always a hustler. Wherever you put me in the world, I'm always going to find my way. I found my way to some random studio in New York, and people are in the room singing, I'm like, okay, I put a melody down and from there, people just say, "Okay, this is good, this is not." A lot of times, too, I sit and I watch and I learn a lot and I soak so much. I always seem, people always think I'm quiet, I'm reserved, but I'm actually just soaking things in and I'm like, how can I learn this or how can I imitate this? That's literally how I learned songwriting, just listening and watching people in the studio. Seeing how they write.

LUVVIE Wow. Usually one thing that you do will lead you to the next thing, what do you think is the key to that? You've been able to eat and build this amazing career on these weird accidents, and they're really not accidents because it's clearly divine design, what is the thing that you think pushes you forward? Why do you think people keep on saying, Tiwa is special, besides the obvious of you can sing your ass off and you can write your ass off, all of that?

TIWA Aside from my family, my mom, and just having a great team, I can't take away the glory from God, because I just see His hand in everything I do. I am, first of all, a 40-year-old woman, a divorced woman, a single mom. That's not who you sign. A record label in America, they don't go, "Oh yeah, she's divorced, we need her. She's a single mom? Yeah. She's 40? Oh yeah, we definitely need to sign her." They usually look for 16, 18, 20-year-old. For them to sign me at this age, with everything that's going on, I feel like that's just God. It's bigger than me, I feel like I'm here to be an inspiration to other women, to be like, "I don't care what stage of your life you're in, whether you're married, you just had a baby. You have to, you owe it to yourself to take that step toward your destiny. You owe it to yourself."

A lot of people unfairly put this pressure on us to know what we want to do by 18 or 25, when I don't even know myself til I'm in my thirties. I don't feel like I'm confident in myself til I'm in my

late thirties, so why do I have to stop being a model at 22? Why do I have to stop being a footballer at 20 something when I'm really fit in my thirties? I want to use myself as an inspiration to anyone out there who's listening. Don't listen when they say your time is up, your time ain't up until God says it's up.

LUVVIE Amen. Amen, your time is definitely not up. You as a mom, how has motherhood changed your music, if it has, and how has it changed how you look at life?

TIWA It's definitely made me a lot more confident in myself, just in my skin and my body. I just feel like what example am I showing my son if I'm fearful? Not that I'm not still afraid of certain things, but I'm just a lot more stronger and confident, I'm a lot more... I think even the opposite, I feel like a lot of people though that when I have my son, I'm going to be a lot more conservative, but I went the opposite, I got a sleeve tattoo we talked about earlier on, I've got piercings, I'm sassy in my lyrics. People are like, "You're a mother, your child is going to grow up to see this." I'm like, "Yeah, and he's going to be like, 'My mom is a bad...'"

LUVVIE Come on, yes. Yes. I love that, because also, I think Nigerians can be very conservative when it comes to parenthood-

TIWA And women.

LUVVIE -and women in general, so them thinking your life is over because now you're a mom, "What about you as a mother?" You decided to take it to the opposite way. What is the lesson you think your son has taught you? What is the biggest lesson?

TIWA To be patient, a lot. I think that's the main thing, because I see myself, when he wants something, and he's like, he only has snacks on Sundays, so on Tuesday he'll be like, "Is it Sunday yet?" I'm like, no. It's Wednesday, "Is it Sunday yet?" I'm like, no. You have to be patient. There was one time when I was in the car and we were stuck in traffic, I was like, "Move the car." He was like, "Mom, you have to be patient." This little [inaudible 00:20:50]. I said, "Yes, Jamil, you're right. You're right, I have to be patient." He's taught me that he learns more through my actions than what I say, so even in life, in general, I just learned that my actions speaks louder than words. I learned to say please and thank you a lot, because I want him to do that. He's literally, I don't know, I'm like a child again with him, relearning all the things that society has tried to strip away from us.

LUVVIE How do you do global touring with him? Do you bring him along?

TIWA No, I used to but he's in school now, and my mom's around so when I have to tour, I leave him at home, because I just don't want to take him out of school.

LUVVIE [inaudible 00:21:33]

TIWA Yeah, I want him to be stable. He's at home.

LUVVIE Got you. As a musician at this point, the fact that you're 40 and you've been in this industry at this point for over 20 years, you keep rising over and over again. You keep reinventing yourself,

you have so many accomplishments, so many accolades. What do you think you're most proud of about your career?

TIWA I don't know if there's that one thing, I think it's what you've said, a combination of the fact that I just keep finding ways to be relevant and just growing. When you feel like I'm really big in Nigeria, and then the next step is, okay, I want to be big in Africa. Now, the stage I'm in is I want to be big globally, or at least my music be heard globally. I don't know what's next, I don't know, maybe try for Mars or something? Maybe, are there people out there?

LUVVIE Why not?

TIWA Yeah, [inaudible 00:22:32].

LUVVIE Who going to tell us to do less? Why stop? Who going to tell us to do less? In fact, in fact, me, I'm like, why even stop at Mars? Why not the moon, honestly? Look, I got you up all day, every day. I've listened to your music for a long time, and I remember one of the first times I actually posted it on Instagram stories, you replied to me, I was like, "Tiwa Savage replied to my Instagram story." One of my things, as this person who's at the intersection of a lot of areas and a lot of identities is I also want to show people what my world looks like. Being able to share Afrobeats, which is a huge part, I listen mostly to 90's R&B, or Afrobeats. There's no in between for me. Sometimes I'll give you some pop, but most of the music I listen to is that, and I love the fact that now Afrobeats is becoming mainstream. That's wild to me. I'm like, yo, who'd have thunk it?

TIWA It's good that we don't have to change so much, we're still keeping our pidgin in there, we're keeping Yoruba.

LUVVIE Yes.

TIWA If you don't know it, you need to learn it, because sometimes we have to learn Spanish words, and I don't know Patois, but I be singing Champois like I know what he's saying.

LUVVIE You know they have BBC Pidgin now? Have you seen it?

TIWA Yes, yes. My pidgin is terrible, so I've been running away.

LUVVIE BBC Pidgin is a whole litation. As your career is now at this level, to the point where you're in Beyonce's biggest project to date, not saying I lost my mind when the video came on... I was over here like, "What?" I had to watch it three times. I'm like, you and Yemi Alade, I was like what is happening? This is unreal!

TIWA I know. It gave us that energy, I said, "Yes, girl."

LUVVIE Give them! You as a woman in music, I know the music industry tries to do the whole pitting people against each other thing, how do you fight that?

TIWA I think it's just everywhere. It happens in America, it happens in the UK.

LUVVIE Everywhere.

TIWA Me personally, honestly, I don't pay attention to it. I know it sounds cliché, but there's nothing else you can do. You can't feed into it, and you can't take it serious. You can't take it personally, too, so it's actually like they're just trying to find ways of comparing who's really good with another person that's really good. In a way, it's like a compliment, if they weren't even mentioning my name at all, I would be like, "Hey guys, I'm here." Yeah, it's just what it is. That's just part of, that's what comes with our job, our profession. It happens everywhere, it's not just here.

LUVVIE Yeah. I love when I see women collaborate, in music especially, because they don't want us to do it. They don't want you all to do it. Women, fight, fight, fight, which is why you are also really big, you're such a vocal voice when it comes to feminism and women's rights. You have an initiative called [We Are Tired](#), to fight against rape culture in Nigeria.

TIWA That's literally just to piggyback on all the other great organizations that have been there way before me, and have been fighting this cause for a long time. I'm literally just lending my voice and my platform to something that really hit hard for me during this lockdown. I guess normally when you're busy, you're traveling up and down, you see the headline, the agent's like, "Okay," and then you move on. Here, it's like you're doing nothing, you're literally just watching your social media like, "This is crazy," and then you realize how bad it is. I'd just had enough, and I was tired, and I was just like, "We are tired." The hashtag started trending, I didn't even mean it, I didn't have any organization set up at that time. I woke up the next day, and I was just like, "I can't just stop with a hashtag. I have to find a way to continue to build this." We're in the process of registering the company and getting finance together, because what I really want to do is provide legal aid to young girls, because most of the time they don't have money for legal aid. That's really what I want to do, is help them in that way.

LUVVIE That's real, because rape culture is big everywhere, but in certain places it's some serious hotspots. We talk about rape culture in the United States, it's awful of course. In a super hyper patriarchal society like Nigeria, it's especially bad because people don't really have any recourse. In the piece that was written about you in Guardian about this initiative, they were saying how there were 700 registered cases of rape in Nigeria between January and May. You want to talk about underreporting? It's not even real.

TIWA Exactly. Exactly. It's even worse, a lot of times some of the girls in my DM's, they will say to me when they go to the police station, the kind of questions they ask them is alarming. It's like, "What were you wearing?" What does that have to do with anything?

LUVVIE What that got to do with anything?

TIWA "What time was it? Was it in a club, was it in a concert?" Those, it's irrelevant. I don't care if I'm laying down butt naked on my bed.

LUVVIE Correct. Correct.

TIWA No is no.

LUVVIE Correct. This is huge. I'm so glad you're doing this, because I get overwhelmed sometimes when I think about how powerless women are rendered in certain places. In the US, which is supposed to be the global leader, we're still rendered powerless, so let alone in a developing country like Nigeria that has a lot of these archaic views that we don't even interrogate on a day to day basis, this is a massive issue that I'm glad you are lending your voice and your power to. How do you, I guess, what do you want? What is the ideal win to come out of We Are Tired?

TIWA I know I can't solve everyone's issues, but what I want to do like I said is piggyback on organizations that are already doing it, and even if it's two, three cases that I take on a year, or we take on, seeing it full all the way through and seeing these perpetrators behind bars, because I feel like that will eventually start to deter other people, because so many people get away with so much, that's a win for me. Even if it's one girl that I'm able to save, that's really my dream, right now, to do that.

LUVVIE Do you have mentees?

TIWA No. I literally just started this all off of my social media.

LUVVIE I know how that is.

TIWA Yeah. I literally went to the DSS, I went to the commissioner of police, visited these people. I'm actually joining forces with other artists like Don Jazzy, [inaudible 00:29:36], we have a separate organization that we're putting together as well. There's a lot of people involved in this that are lending their voice apart from my foundation, they have another foundation. It just seems like a #MeToo moment in Nigeria, a lot of artists are just standing up, we have to do something.

LUVVIE What do you think your responsibility is with your platform that you have? Outside of We Are Tired, how do you see this 11 million followers that hear you on Instagram every day?

TIWA That's why this album was really important, because I feel like music can also be a healing tool, especially with this lockdown. Yeah, I have songs that are great, club records, you want to work out to, but I also have songs that you want to listen to when you just feel like the world is coming to an end. It's specific to women, to my female followers, [Celia](#) is a celebration of women of color, the different emotions that we go through, the different textures we have as Black women and African women.

LUVVIE How was creating?

TIWA Creating was great, we spent two weeks in a hotel and we rented about eight, nine rooms. Day and night, we just had different producers, sometimes the room would have three producers, sometimes we would have 10 writers, two writers, me by myself with a guitarist, we would just, it was seamless. Day and night, day and night. We were just recording, we didn't listen to anything. No music, no radio, no playlist, no nothing. We were just all vibing. We would play songs, and we would have parties with that song, because I was just like, if we do a record and we can't dance to it, then how do you want something else to dance to your record? We spent two weeks in Nigeria literally just creating. That's the first time I've ever done anything like that.

LUVVIE Do you typically, what is your usual process?

TIWA Usually, I'll just get beats, I'll go to the studio, I'll hear beats and I'll put ideas down, I'll have another songwriter, or I might have a concept in my head and I'll call up the producer and work. The song might already be done, I'll listen to it and change a few things. This was different, because it was working with so many different people simultaneously.

LUVVIE In a hyper bubble, basically.

TIWA Absolutely. In the heat of Lagos.

LUVVIE In the heat of Lagos, in the energy of Lagos. I tell people, I was in Lagos in 2018, I brought 30 of my friends. Tiwa, wait, did we see... I don't know if we saw you. It was me, Boz, we came with literally 30 of our friends, we had, we stayed in Eko Atlantic, it was a whole situation. A whole situation.

TIWA Eko Atlantic?

LUVVIE We stayed at Eko Atlantic, yeah. We got 10 apartments, it was a whole lit... Yeah, we were in there, running through Lagos, living our best lives. Then we went to Ghana, where we met up with another 70 of our friends in [crosstalk 00:32:43].

TIWA Was that last year? That wasn't the year of the return, right? It was the year before?

LUVVIE It was the year before the year of return, I think we might have kicked off the year of return.

TIWA Wow.

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TIWA Wow.

LUVVIE It's a good place for creativity.

TIWA There's an energy.

LUVVIE The energy in Lagos is like, it's intoxicating. That's what it is.

TIWA It's like New York times 10.

LUVVIE It's New York on steroids. It's like if New York took cocaine. That is why I love that city, I'm like, I can do seven days if I have to. Seven days before my blood pressure goes too high, I can't even do it.

TIWA I feel you, I feel you. I've been here for like five months, no wait, since January, so it's longer than that. Been longer than [inaudible 00:33:37]. First time I been here this long.

LUVVIE How is that new experience? You're back home now.

TIWA Yeah, I was at one point, I was going crazy. It was good, because I got to spend time with Jamil.

LUVVIE That's amazing. With the album coming out, what do you want people to walk away feeling and saying about it?

TIWA I want them to be inspired, I want them to know this is, I grew up listening to female anthems like Brandi and Monica, I want to do that on Afrobeats. I want to have female anthems with Afrobeats, I want people to be able to sing the songs. Women, just walking away with a piece of music that represents so many emotions that they have, but in Afrobeat.

LUVVIE This might be really tough, it's kind of like asking a mom for her favorite kid. You don't have a favorite record, do you?

TIWA Everybody keeps asking me that, I definitely, I don't. It's hard, I don't. I really, really honestly don't.

LUVVIE That's fair, because I can't pick my favorite pair of shoes. It's fair, do you know what I mean? Same, I get you. I get you. Do you know what I mean? Same thing, I can't pick my favorite blazer, I understand. Try and make you choose, you're like, "Nope." Has your mom listened to it?

TIWA She just listened to it today, I had a little listening party with some of my fans and I asked her to join in the Zoom meeting, she heard it. My mom is so quiet, she's powerful but she's very quiet. She's like, "It's very, very, very nice. My daughter, she works so hard."

LUVVIE They're so cute. They're quiet with the rest of the world, just not with us. It's okay. It's okay. Listen, I understand. It's very nice. Meanwhile, she probably going to be calling all her friends.

TIWA Yeah, she weren't quiet when she used to whoop my butt, I'll tell you that much.

LUVVIE Exactly, and I bet you afterwards, I bet she called her friends like, "If you listen to Tiwa's album, it's facts, it was everything." You're going to hear from other people, "She's so proud."

TIWA I know.

LUVVIE "She's just the proudest, she thinks it's amazing." You'll be like, "Did she tell me? She didn't tell me."

TIWA Oh man.

LUVVIE I know that's how it goes.

Rants Family, if you haven't joined us in Luvv Nation and become a Luvv Cousin yet, I need you to do that. Luvv Nation is my free community that is a safe space in a dumpster fire world. It's the place for the most thoughtful, funny, most chill deficient people on the interwebs. We're a community that comes together to make each other better with curated conversations,

opportunities to connect, and challenges to help us transform and do better in every area of our lives. You got to stop sitting on this and come to luvvnation.com, that's L-U-V-V-N-A-T-I-O-N. Download the app in the App Store or on Android, and come through. Back to the podcast.

- LUVVIE I'm always interested in how do you keep your friends grounded, how do you keep your girl squad together as you are world dominating?
- TIWA The honest truth is doing this kind of job and being an artist, you definitely lose friends along the way. That's not intentional, that's just because sometimes you have to miss birthdays, you have to miss weddings or whatever. Sometimes your closest friends, they just don't understand. They're like, "I don't get it, I was there for this, I was there when you did your first recording, I was there when we went to your first show." It's like, I know, but how do I explain to you I can't make this? That's one of the hardest parts. My close, close, close friends, they still understand. They still, they've been with me for so long and we have a little chat every once in a while, they understand that even though we don't speak every day, when we do talk we catch up. It just feels like yesterday.
- LUVVIE Like nothing changed, got you. Yeah, I understand that piece, in the level up that's a huge piece that people always ask about, how do you curate a friend squad, how do you keep your friends? You will lose friends. Nobody can say that they are trying to be successful and have kept every single friend, because you will lose people along the way. What do you try to make sure you do, even if it's once a week? Do you have any types of routines?
- TIWA In terms of friends or just generally?
- LUVVIE Just generally.
- TIWA I don't. Do I? No. I was going to lie and say I go to the gym, but I don't. I don't want to lie to you guys.
- LUVVIE Right, right. We not lying, we not lying.
- TIWA You guys will go on my socials and be like, "We ain't never seen her post a picture."
- LUVVIE She lying.
- TIWA No, no I don't. Sorry, no. I don't have anything.
- LUVVIE Do you have a self-care routine? I always ask people, what do you do for self-care? What is the thing that makes you feel good?
- TIWA I just started doing all these facials and stuff at home, I have all these turmeric and... Sorry, hold on one second. Okay. I've been trying all these face masks and cucumbers and all this stuff, it's actually really, really working. One of them, one of the home remedies that I did burned my face, but we're good, we're back. Yeah, it's cool. I worked it out.
- LUVVIE What is your favorite skin care product?

TIWA I love [Barbara Sturm](#).

LUVVIE Yeah.

TIWA Yeah, I love her serum and her face cream for darker tones. It's literally, I used to have a lot of pigmentation, it's literally this area and everything. What else do I use? I have turmeric, I mix turmeric and honey, I put it under my armpit and [inaudible 00:39:05] because I'm trying to get that blend.

LUVVIE The blend.

TIWA Rice flour is really good.

LUVVIE Really? For what?

TIWA For the same thing. I use rice flour and I mix it with lemon and honey, I'll stand there in the bathroom like this for 20 minutes.

LUVVIE Do you use, I'm a fan of vitamin C serums?

TIWA Yes, of course. I think, wait, does Barbara Sturm, I think it has vitamin C. Or is it [crosstalk 00:39:35]-

LUVVIE They might. Hyaluronic?

TIWA Hyaluronic, that's it.

LUVVIE Hyaluronic, it's a moisture and all of that stuff. I'm a vitamin C, but also the sunlight in Lagos is intense, so what sunscreen are you using?

TIWA Honestly, I don't know the name, but I literally, I do use sunscreen every day. I promise you, it has a little yellow cap. I'm really sorry, you know what? I'm going to post it on my story.

LUVVIE [crosstalk 00:39:59] [Supergoop!](#).

TIWA Is that it?

LUVVIE Supergoop!? With the white bottle, yellow cap?

TIWA White thin bottle with a yellow.

LUVVIE I think so, that might be Supergoop!, their color scheme is white, and a lot of Black women use it because it doesn't leave gray cast on your face.

TIWA No, it doesn't. It's very light, and it's very good under makeup as well. I'm going to post it on my story, because I swear by it, it's really good. I want to break that notion that Black people think they don't need sun lotion.

LUVVIE Yo, we need sunscreen. Also, the cool thing is, you being this chocolate woman, we didn't even touch on that theme, you're this chocolate woman who is visible in Nigeria where being chocolate is not loved sometimes.

TIWA No, it's hard.

LUVVIE That's massive. That is so massive. The fact that you don't bleach your skin is huge.

TIWA I did, I tried to when I was younger.

LUVVIE Did you?

TIWA When I was much younger, when I was about 18. When I was about 18 I tried, because I was just under so much pressure and I wanted to be lighter. My skin, you know when, the products are probably much better, but then it was leaving patches on my skin, especially on my back. My mom would notice, she'd just like, "What are you doing to your skin?" I was like, "Nothing." She one day went into my room, saw all these products, she threw everything out and she had this long talk with me. I can't even remember exactly what it was, but I remember being ashamed that she caught me and I stopped doing it after that. That literally was, just seeing how disappointed she was, she was just like, "God didn't make a mistake when He made you, He knows what he's doing."

You know when Nigerian parents are talking to you, it's always God [inaudible 00:41:43]. She was like, "God did not make a mistake. He knew what he was doing." I just stopped, but I did try, that's the honest truth. I did try.

LUVVIE Can I just say I really appreciate you for actually saying that? People don't have these real conversations about bleaching and the colorism that happens. I love the fact that your mom had that conversation with you. I know people whose moms will get them bleaching creams and say, "You're too dark."

TIWA What?

LUVVIE Yes. Girl, I actually wrote about this in my first book, because I was talking about how we spent so much time judging the things that don't make sense. We'll judge the skin tone that we were born with, and because of it a lot of people are putting all types of toxic chemicals on their bodies in a way that is like, I want to be lighter. We know as Nigerian women how big it is.

TIWA [crosstalk 00:42:39]

LUVVIE How the whole lightening industry, it is such a thing.

TIWA I mean, I learned from my friends, I have really good friends that have gone through that process, they're still really good friends of mine and I love them, I'm definitely not one to judge. I just feel that the pressure is just so much on women and a man grows up, the darker he is, the more attractive he is.

LUVVIE Yeah. Make it make sense, make it make sense. How does it make sense?

TIWA Exactly. If you, as a Black man, the darker you are, you're looking like Morris Chestnut and all these people are like... We need to do the same for Black women.

LUVVIE I think you are, because to your point of how your son has taught you that you have to be more than you even say, and he's learning from that, there are young Nigerian girls who are looking at you who are like, "Me and Tiwa are the same color, I'm fine. She's good."

TIWA Yes, yes. Absolutely. We have to keep pushing that narrative, we have to. We have to keep pushing that narrative, because our story has been twisted and warped for so many years. We need to switch it around. We need to own it.

LUVVIE The time is now. The time is now, and I think we are owning it. That's why I love what Boz represents. Boz is this six-foot, midnight dark Ghanaian woman, and I'm just like, when she walks in the room, you can't ignore her and I hope another girl sees that and says, "I look just like that. I'm good."

TIWA She's just this eagle that walks in, she doesn't care that she's tall. She will still wear high heels, she has the hair even bigger, so she appears bigger. She's unapologetic, that's what I love about it. She's not trying to hide in the corner. I don't know man, I'm so glad you brought her name up because she's beautiful and I love what she's doing with her daughter as well.

LUVVIE Yes, Lael. Them two, they're the best together. They're the best together. I honestly just, I'm inspired by you even beyond the music of it all, you being this fierce voice in a country that's not necessarily always asking and welcoming women being a fierce voice. Not just that, on the global stage, as a global citizen, at this point you've lived in three different countries at least. You also are operating these different spaces and moving so well, no matter what is thrown at you, you've handled it with so much grace.

TIWA Thank you.

LUVVIE I am proud to live in a time and place where Tiwa Savage exists.

TIWA Thank you, that really means a lot to me. That really, really means a lot to me. A lot of times we want to give up, we feel like maybe this is the end of the road, maybe I've tried and then you hear something like that and you're like, no. I still have more to do.

LUVVIE We need you to keep going. What do you want people to say about you when you are not in the room?

TIWA Oh.

LUVVIE Is that the first time somebody's asked you that?

TIWA Yes. Yes.

LUVVIE Come on, we got the exclusive questions.

TIWA I want them to be like, make sure you get it right, because when Tiwa comes, she doesn't play around. She's a no-nonsense person. No, I want them to say I'm a hardworking African woman who literally, I don't know, who didn't take no for an answer.

LUVVIE Yes. Yes. I think people will probably say that about you right now, because you definitely don't take any no's, any no's. You're not taking any of it.

TIWA No, no. I don't even hear it no more. Before I used to and I'll cry, but now I'm just like, "Oh, no? You mean yes, right?" If they say no, no, no, by the time you wake up tomorrow, you will say yes.

LUVVIE Yes, I am excited to actually listen to this new album, I'm be playing it all over the house, I might be jamming to it on Insta story, my people will [crosstalk 00:46:50] tomorrow. Me, I'll be on Insta story just living my best life, listening to it. Telling people, I'll add it to my, because you know my Afrobeats playlist has been rolling.

TIWA Yes, I know.

LUVVIE I will be adding a few tracks to it, because I already know it's going to be [inaudible 00:47:07]. I'm excited for you.

TIWA Thank you.

LUVVIE How do you want people to support you?

TIWA Just share it, stream it, share it with your loved ones, friends. As girls, I want it to be like when I first heard Brandy, "The Boy is Mine" and I was telling all my girls, that's the energy I want into. I want them to pass it on, to non-Africans, just for women all across the globe. I want it to move.

LUVVIE We do a number one Billboard single, that's what we claiming, in Jesus' name. We are claiming it, in Jesus' name. Number one Billboard single, a hit. All the hits.

TIWA Won't he!

LUVVIE Won't He do it. Tiwa, thank you so much for joining me Rants.

TIWA Thank you.

LUVVIE I'm so glad we were able to have this conversation, I am always rooting for you.

TIWA Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Yo, that was amazing. Tiwa is brilliant, I loved her transparency about being an African woman, being a Nigerian woman. I loved her lessons about the music industry, I love that she's a mom. I'm a fan of

women who are boldly and fiercely themselves, and Tiwa showed up and gave us the gems. Yeah, be sure to follow her on social media, she's @TiwaSavage on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), you definitely got to get her new album [Celia](#), that just dropped last Friday.

Much love to Chicago Recording Company, who I've been partnering with from the start of this podcast, and where I currently don't record this podcast, but they're such a huge help putting my recordings from home together and making the sound on point.

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As always, you can follow me on social media, I'm at [@Luvvie](#) everywhere.