



## Rants & Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi

Wait for Your Harvest (with Austin Channing Brown) - Episode 47

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Yo, my PEOPLE! Welcome to Rants and Randomness. I'm your host Luvvie Ajayi Jones, New York Times bestselling author, speaker and professional troublemaker, and I'm here to share dope conversations that will give you something to think about, help you smile and feel empowered to do what you feel compelled to do. So, let's get into it.

Today I'm talking to the amazing Austin Channing Brown. If you don't know Austin and her work already, you need to get ready. She's a speaker, writer, a media producer providing inspired leadership on racial justice in America. She is the author of New York Times bestselling [\*I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness\*](#) - recently chosen as a Reese Witherspoon Book Club pick - and she's the Executive Producer of web series [\*The Next Question\*](#).

During our conversation, we talk about everything from how she grew up, how she got this name – Austin, what she does to make sure that she's finding rest in this really, really stressful world and how she makes sure that she passes on opportunities she gets. How she became this person, this voice, this person that ended up writing a book that two years after it came out went back into the New York Times bestselling list. It's a great conversation, so take a listen.

Before we jump into the interview, I want to make sure the Rants fam knows that my new book, [\*PROFESSIONAL TROUBLEMAKER: The Fear-Fighter Manual\*](#) comes out March 2, 2021 and is available for pre-order right now!

I wrote this book because 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. We don't have to call ourselves fearless, we need to learn to fight the fear and imposter syndrome by feeling it and using it as fuel to become better versions of ourselves. The things I'm talking about in this book will take you from being a fear-hider to a fear-fighter, and heaven knows we got a lot of things that bring up fear right now. So to order it, go to [professionaltroublemakerbook.com](https://professionaltroublemakerbook.com) to learn more and grab the links to pre-order or order it from wherever you get books. I'm so excited for you to read this book. It's lit.

## Conversation with Austin Channing Brown

[00:02:14]

- LUVVIE            So my people, welcome to **Rants & Randomness**. I'm your host Luvvie and I'm always having great conversations with great people and today I am super excited because I am in conversation with the amazing Austin Channing Brown.
- AUSTIN            Hi friends.
- LUVVIE            She is a New York Times bestselling author. She's an educator, she's a dope Black woman. She is just doing amazing things out here and you know, I like to have people who I am just am intrigued by their lives, respect their work, and Austin is one of those people. Yeah. Hey, Austin.
- AUSTIN            Hey, girl.
- LUVVIE            Oh my gosh. Thank you for coming on.
- AUSTIN            My pleasure. That was the easiest yes of the pandemic.
- LUVVIE            Listen, listen. I know people think, asking people left and right for interviews and you know what I mean?
- AUSTIN            That's true. It's true.
- LUVVIE            I know everybody's tired so whenever people say yes to me, I be like, "Thank you." Okay, because I know you can be saying 18 "no's" right now.
- AUSTIN            True.
- LUVVIE            And you're saying yes to me. So, I appreciate you.
- AUSTIN            I have been following your work forever.
- LUVVIE            Oh my God.
- AUSTIN            So it's an honor to hang out with you today.
- LUVVIE            Crazy, I love it. The collision of worlds.
- AUSTIN            It's true.
- LUVVIE            Yes. I'm always curious to find out from people, as they come on Rants. What did you want to be when you were growing up?
- AUSTIN            Whitney Houston.

LUVVIE That might be the best answer I've ever received to that question. That actually might be the best answer I have ever received. Tell me more.

AUSTIN Yeah, I mean, every girl wants to be a singer and a star and Whitney was the star.

LUVVIE Everything.

AUSTIN The singer.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN I am still kind of convinced that she's my long last auntie and we just never connected, you know?

LUVVIE Yes, yes. I know.

AUSTIN But that if we had just met, she would have known that we were in sync.

LUVVIE Because we would have had a good Kiki.

AUSTIN You know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE Whitney looked like she loved some mess and some tea and some-

AUSTIN She's so goofy and so silly and-

LUVVIE I loved her.

AUSTIN Yeah, yeah. I really wanted to meet Whitney Houston.

LUVVIE That's one of my regrets. That's one of my regrets, so I feel you on that. Was it the singing part that you wanted to be? Or the star part? Or just the messy auntie part?

AUSTIN This is a good question. I wasn't really aware of how messy she was until I was older.

LUVVIE Okay, true, true, true.

AUSTIN Right? Young Austin was just seeing really her voice. It really was her voice. I don't think I was even fully aware that she was famous. I just thought, "I knew about Whitney." You know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE You thought it was your little secret?

AUSTIN You know what I'm saying? I had the tape. You know what I'm saying? But I didn't know if everybody had the tape. I just knew I liked the tape, right? And I remember being struck. Struck by her beauty-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... when *The Bodyguard* came out. Right? And being able to see her for an entire movie, not just this little clip, not this little interview, but I just was overwhelmed. And then, the one about the pastor, she's married to the pastor. Denzel Washington.

LUVVIE *Preacher's Wife*.

AUSTIN *Preacher's Wife*.

LUVVIE Yes. Another.

AUSTIN When she starts singing to her little boy, I was like, "What if Whitney was singing you to sleep? Oh my God. You imagine."

LUVVIE First of all that'll be the best sleep you ever got in your life.

AUSTIN Ever.

LUVVIE That'll be the best sleep you ever got in your life.

AUSTIN The angels have come to your bedroom.

LUVVIE Yeah, no. She was amazing.

AUSTIN To sing you to sleep.

LUVVIE And that's value. Whitney was dope because, thinking about the fact that she was the leading lady in *The Bodyguard*. That was revolutionary at that point for a black woman.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE To have a white man love interest in a regular romantic comedy. It wasn't about her necessarily being a black woman. She was just a really gorgeous woman in a romantic comedy.

AUSTIN Just a star, right?

LUVVIE Whitney was groundbreaking in so many ways.

AUSTIN So many ways.

LUVVIE That woman is still going to get my flowers. She's still going to get my flowers.

AUSTIN I know. I know.

LUVVIE She's still going to get enough flowers.

AUSTIN It makes me upset when anybody says her name without the intention of giving her flowers. Just keep the name out your mouth.

LUVVIE No.

AUSTIN If you ain't ready to hand over some roses. Look, I got some roses right here.

LUVVIE Right here.

AUSTIN You just go give Whitney some roses.

LUVVIE For Whitney.

AUSTIN Listen.

LUVVIE Come on.

AUSTIN Listen.

LUVVIE Nippy. Nippy was everything. I swear. We don't appreciate folks until they die. Which is unfortunate right?

AUSTIN I know. It's awful.

LUVVIE Unfortunate. Because we was cracking jokes about Whitney saying crack is wack for five years, and then she died and everybody was like, "Oh my God." I'm like, "See, we're trash as a society. We are trash as a society. Trash."

AUSTIN I agree.

LUVVIE But, yeah. Where did you grow up and what was little Austin like? I want to know because I'm always curious to find out what the little version of everybody was like.

AUSTIN Totally. I grew up in Toledo, Ohio.

LUVVIE Okay.

AUSTIN Which is about 45 minutes south of Detroit, and about two hours west of Cleveland. So a pretty no-name town. If you're from Ohio then you know what Toledo is. If you ain't from Ohio then you're like, "Where the heck-"

LUVVIE Midwest. If you're from the Midwest you know what it is.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE You know what I mean?

AUSTIN That's what it is.

LUVVIE It's a solidly Midwest town.

AUSTIN Right. I'll be honest, Luvvie, I don't remember much about being a little, little kid because my parents got divorced when I was eight, and that wiped out everything. Wiped everything out. It was like the defining moment of childhood. But I remember being in love with books. I remember going to Toledo's rib fest, which like the one festival we had in the summer.

LUVVIE Got you. Okay, the turn up. All right.

AUSTIN Right. And even though we were a little town, we still had everything we needed. We had the movie theater, we had the skating rink, we had the mall. Now, they were tiny versions of all of that.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN But we could find them. I think prior to my parents getting a divorce, I think I was pretty normal, going to a private, white, Christian school. But I didn't discover, Luvvie, until I was older that my parents did not choose it because it was Christian, which was a news flash for me.

LUVVIE What made them choose it?

AUSTIN They choose it because it was the best place to get an education at that time in Ohio. I mean in Toledo. I was like, "Huh."

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN I know.

LUVVIE That's huge. Listen. The stuff that parents don't be telling us. When they got a divorce. What was pre-divorce life and then what was post for you?

AUSTIN Yeah, so pre-divorce was me messing around with my little brother and making him get in trouble for things I did.

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN You know what I mean?

LUVVIE It's a rite of passage.

AUSTIN Typical brother, sister stuff. After the divorce was, it shook up everything for me. My parents got divorced when I was eight. My dad immediately started dating and had my half-sister by the time I was nine.

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN And by 10 I had a stepmom. So, I went from my family being this little four unit-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... to now having this blended family, and my mom. And I didn't live with my mom, I lived with my dad. It was a lot happening, Luvvie. It was a lot happening in two years.

LUVVIE Kids tend to adapt for good or bad, right? How was that shift? How did it change you in any way?

AUSTIN Oh my God, it was so hard. I became the peace maker of the family. I was the go between, between my mom and my dad, between my stepmom and my mom, trying to shield my little sister, my half-sister, little sister from whatever drama was happening. Yeah. It was rough. I'm not going to lie to you, Luvvie. It was hard. I feel like we don't talk enough about what it's like to be a child who has divorced parents.

LUVVIE No, we don't, because everyone just brushes over it.

AUSTIN We just treat it like it's normal. Yeah. We just treat it like, "Well, of course. Of course, your parents were." But, that shit ain't normal, Luvvie. It's not normal.

LUVVIE You're going to this all white school.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE Your parents get a divorce.

AUSTIN Yeah. And it's a Christian school.

LUVVIE And it's a Christian school.

AUSTIN So, the fact that my parents are divorced is a big deal. And then people are intrigued because they're like, "But you don't live with your mama." Lots of question, Luvvie. People would be like...

LUVVIE And you never gave them.

AUSTIN They were like.

LUVVIE The kids were like, "There's a lot here. There's a lot here. What's happening?"

AUSTIN They're like, "What is happening?" Thankfully, I was a really good student in school.

LUVVIE Okay.

AUSTIN And I had gone to the same school since I was in pre-preschool, when your mama got to go to work.

LUVVIE        Yep.

AUSTIN        You don't have a year-long maternity leave. I had gone to that same school my entire childhood. Truthfully, even though it was mostly white school, I owned that place.

LUVVIE        Yes.

AUSTIN        I would walk the halls. If the teacher had to leave the class, I was the one in charge. Sometimes I would just take the hall pass and just wander to the faculty bathroom because I don't want to use our bathroom. [inaudible 00:09:07].

LUVVIE        What?

AUSTIN        [crosstalk 00:09:07]. That was all.

LUVVIE        Usually the story when people are like, "I went to an all-white school," is that, they're like, "I was tortured and it was..." So for you, you was like, "No, no, no I was running the place."

AUSTIN        I was running it. I knew everybody and everybody knew me. Yes.

LUVVIE        I do love hearing that. I actually love hearing that because, angles, layers. Okay. Basically your blackness ended up being a Superman cape for real.

AUSTIN        Kind of, because it gave me a certain level of power that I knew things about whiteness that whiteness didn't know about me. I knew more, in some ways, I knew more than what my teachers knew. Right?

LUVVIE        Because usually for us to be black in America, you've got to navigate both the black and the white, so we could all talk. We could give you references of Golden Girls.

AUSTIN        Listen. Listen.

LUVVIE        While we give you reference of Fresh Prince.

AUSTIN        Girl.

LUVVIE        We just be out here.

AUSTIN        Girl.

LUVVIE        Wow, so it worked really well for you growing up.

AUSTIN        It did. And the older I got, the more diverse the school got. Thankfully, when I was in preschool, there was maybe three of us.

LUVVIE        Okay.



AUSTIN But by the time I was in the sixth grade, I bet our class was maybe 40% people of color.

LUVVIE Really?

AUSTIN Yeah, so it just kept diversifying and diversifying over time. Yeah. It was wonderful.

LUVVIE Wow. Okay, so you went to school all through high school or elementary?

AUSTIN Nope, all through elementary, and then went to a different private high school.

LUVVIE And then same thing, it was diverse?

AUSTIN Yep, it was probably your average 20-25% students of color.

LUVVIE That's the high school I went to, yep.

AUSTIN But we could always find each other and we did in the lunch room and gospel choir. And I'll tell you this, I haven't fully investigated-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... how this impacted things, but my high school was in the middle of the hood.

LUVVIE Really? A private school.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE I mean, gentrification. Yeah.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE There's so much. There's so much. God.

AUSTIN There's so many layers there, right? But, I don't know. In some ways, maybe it felt like it was still our territory.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN Because I live in the hood.

LUVVIE Right, right.

AUSTIN Luvvie. I was on the other side of town. But, walking outside the doors and instantly knowing, "This is a black neighborhood." And the residents are black.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN           And the folks working at the McDonald's is black.

LUVVIE           Yeah.

AUSTIN           You know, I don't know. I think in some ways it still felt like it was ours.

LUVVIE           Yeah.

AUSTIN           Just by sheer location. I don't know.

LUVVIE           What was your group of friends growing up like?

AUSTIN           My best friend, I was such a goody two shoes. Not condescending about it, but it was just like, "Here she is." My best friend was my pastor's daughter.

LUVVIE           Yeah, no. You'll was the good kid. Well, although, it could go a different way.

AUSTIN           It could. It could.

LUVVIE           Although it could go a different way.

AUSTIN           Right?

LUVVIE           I've seen pastor's daughters being completely on the other side.

AUSTIN           Right.

LUVVIE           Yeah.

AUSTIN           But she wasn't. We were two peas in a pod. We went to the movies together, we went to the mall together, but then we also sang the gospel choir together and then we would go to church and we would tag team praise and worship, and then we would, you know, [inaudible 00:12:22].

LUVVIE           And was she Black? Was she white? What was she?

AUSTIN           Black. Yep, yep. She's Black.

LUVVIE           You have found ways to center your blackness even as you are in these spaces throughout.

AUSTIN           Yeah. There was a moment, Luvvie, when my life really could have gone two different directions with either loving Blackness or not.

LUVVIE           Yeah.

AUSTIN           And it was right after my parent's divorce.

LUVVIE           Okay.

AUSTIN My mom moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and to an all Black neighborhood and I had to go spend summers with her.

LUVVIE Okay.

AUSTIN And so for the first time other than family or church, I was in this all black context and I was like, "I don't know nothing about this. I don't know, I don't know nothing about double dutch, I don't know nothing about Bobby Brown. I don't know nothing about Candy Man." There were just so many contemporary references that I didn't have because of the school that I went to.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN And so I just felt lost, Luvvie, I felt so lost.

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN And, not just that, Luvvie, by the culture itself.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN I'm in a private, white, Christian school where you sit like this and you are quiet and you are reserved and that's what gets the accolades, right? And then I move to this all-Black context where in some ways, the louder you are, the more popular you are. The more bubbly you are, the bigger personality that you have, the fast that you can talk. That is what's valuable.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN And I didn't know how to do none of that, Luvvie.

LUVVIE How did that go down?

AUSTIN God sent me a little girlfriend in Tiffany. You actually remind me of her. She was this teeny, tiny girl but she packed a punch, child. There was no mistaking whether or not she was in the room. And for whatever reason, she could see me, and so she would hand me magazines and she would invite me over to practice dancing, and she eventually ended up at the same summer camp, so she would defend me as people started picking on me because the way I talk or something like that.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN She was wonderful and she really taught me that I could be in the space of Blackness and still define myself and still be loved by people who are different than me.

LUVVIE Yes. And your name. Your name is Austin, and I know there's an interesting story behind how you got this name.

AUSTIN Let me tell you about how often I confuse people, Luvvie.

LUVVIE All the time.

AUSTIN All the time.

LUVVIE Because a Black girl named Austin is not...

AUSTIN It's not a thing.

LUVVIE It's not a thing. No, no, no.

AUSTIN I was very used to people assuming I would be a boy if they hadn't met me yet but they had seen my name, and this was late 80s, early 90s when we decided to personalize everything.

LUVVIE Everything was a monogram.

AUSTIN Everything.

LUVVIE We had the monogrammed belt, we had the custom belts with the little scroll in through. We had the Von Dutch hats.

AUSTIN We had the, okay, the necklace.

LUVVIE The necklace, the name plate, oh girl.

AUSTIN The slapstick bracelets.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN The little, wait Luvvie, the little license plates. The mini license plates. I don't even know what they were for. What were those for? What were we supposed to do?

LUVVIE We used those for some belt buckles. I saw some people do that in belt buckles.

AUSTIN That's-

LUVVIE I did not because I couldn't afford that. I was like, "That's cute." Meanwhile, all I doing. My hat. My Luvvie spray painted hats. I did. I did [crosstalk 00:15:41].

AUSTIN Right? Spray paint. I forgot about that.

LUVVIE Did, okay.

AUSTIN We grew up in the best era.

LUVVIE Right?

AUSTIN So good. One day I got to the library and I hand the librarian my card, and she's like, "Is this your card?" And I'm like, "I think so. Right?" But it could be my mama's, it could be my little brother's, right? So I'm a little hesitant. And she's like, "This card says Austin." And I'm like, "I see what's happening here."

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN You thought I was going to be a boy. I'm like, "Yeah, that's my card. My name is Austin." Luvvie tell me why that woman was like, "Are you sure?" Well, I was like...

LUVVIE "Do I not know my own name, sis? What are we talking about?"

AUSTIN You see the stack of books.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN You see the library fine that I owe. Why do you think I don't know what my name is. I don't understand. So I marched over to my mother and demanded that she tell me why she gave me this crazy name, and my mama sat me down Luvvie, and she said, "Austin, if you had been a boy, you would have been a junior, but we had never figured out a girl's name." She said, "So, one of us said 'Austin' out loud which is a family name." And she said, "We loved it immediately because we knew anybody who saw your name written down but hadn't met you yet would assume you're a white man."

LUVVIE Wow, come on.

AUSTIN She said, "Austin, one day you're going to have interviews, you're going to have to fill out applications for college or for a job or for a house." She's like, "We just wanted to make sure you made it to the interview."

LUVVIE Wow. Oh my God.

AUSTIN I was like, "Okay." I was like, "Al right. Well."

LUVVIE Wow. Man, the things Black parents have to think through. They named you Austin so it wouldn't opt you out. Man. And it's Austin Channing, before you became a Brown on top of that.

AUSTIN Right, so you...

LUVVIE So you know it was the... They thought-

AUSTIN Nobody who?

LUVVIE They thought you were going to walk in with blonde hair and blue eyes.

AUSTIN Luvvie let me tell you what happens. I always feel so bad for the person who has to come out and get me for the group interview, because that person has to walk out into the lobby and look around and see me sitting there, and you can see the look on their face when they're like, "Damn, did we invite the Black woman instead of the white man?"

LUVVIE Yep. Yes you all did. Now that I'm here-

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE Now that I'm here, okay. Wow. Wow.

AUSTIN Yeah, it trips people up all the time.

LUVVIE That is fascinating.

AUSTIN So much so, Luvvie, so much so that even in interviews, most people have to acknowledge it. They can't just let the conversation go on and pretend that that wasn't happening. By almost every single interviewer, the person who is interviewing me says, "I'm sorry, can you tell me about your name?"

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN Or they will admit that they were shocked, because they can't get by it. They cannot get by. So bullshit on this colorblind mess.

LUVVIE Okay, first of all-

AUSTIN That's all. That's all bullshit.

LUVVIE ... we already know that's ultra bullshit. That is the top bullshit, okay? Ain't none of that shit happening. As somebody's whose name is very African.

AUSTIN Right, right.

LUVVIE I had no the trust but... You know what I mean? Yo, I think that is actually pretty cool because, first of all, Austin is actually a really cool name.

AUSTIN Thanks.

LUVVIE And then, I love whenever women carry names that are more masculine too.

AUSTIN I know. Me too.

LUVVIE Because it feels like you walk in with this [crosstalk 00:19:17].

AUSTIN There's power in it, right? I know, I know.

LUVVIE You walk in, you're "Austin Channing," bro. That is just like, "Yes." I love hearing that. So, yeah. Your parents had that in mind because they had big plans for you, clearly.

AUSTIN Yes, my mother was convinced that I was going to be the first Black, female president.

LUVVIE Really?

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE So when you weren't being Whitney Houston...

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE She was like, "You're going to end up in the White House."

AUSTIN She was absolute convinced.

LUVVIE So, what college did you go and what was your major?

AUSTIN I went to North Park University in Chicago. Yes, I lived in Chicago for seven years, so in a lot of ways, Chicago is home for me, and I majored in business management, I love marketing.

LUVVIE Okay.

AUSTIN I am that person that when you sit and watch TV, I will analyze the commercial and be like, "That was not a good commercial."

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN Or, "That was a fantastic commercial." Right like a [inaudible 00:20:18].

LUVVIE "The messaging on that was not right. Yes, yes."

AUSTIN I'll stop the middle of a conversation and be like, "There was a typo in that commercial, can you believe that?" I am that person. But I thought one day I would run a business that helped teenagers who were aging out of the foster system. So that's why I business management degree, because I wanted to know how to make it profitable in case I didn't go the non-profit route.

LUVVIE Why'd you care about that issue?

AUSTIN I have no idea. I think it because it was because being a kid who, even though I had two homes and my parents really, really loved me. Fought for most of my teenage life over who was going to have custody. Because I was always navigating two homes, neither of them felt like home, so I think there was some part of me that really identified with that internal struggle even though my life situation was very different.

LUVVIE Yeah, wow. So you start with this business management. Is that actually how you finished.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE There's very few of us who actually started... Well, I'm a different story because technically I was Psychology/Pre-Med, but I dropped Psych. But I still got the Psych. I mean I dropped the Pre-Med but I still got the Psych.

AUSTIN Got you.

LUVVIE So people who started with the same major, and ended with it. Shout out. That is some deep commitment.

AUSTIN I'm sure. I know.

LUVVIE And throughout college, what did you learn outside of the classroom?

AUSTIN My gosh.

LUVVIE I know college recrystallizes who we are.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE We learn and change so much in the four years, four, five years.

AUSTIN Luvvie, that's a great question.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN So first I learned how to navigate a big city. I went from Toledo where you drive everywhere, I don't think I've ever seen a bus. Toledo has them but I don't think I've ever seen one. I've never gotten stopped behind on to Chicago where I'm hopping on and off the L-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... because I don't have a car. Just learning how to navigate the city, learning how to interact with a crazy level of diversity.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN Discovering how the city has been formed and shaped and going to the south side with lots of football players.

LUVVIE Word. Okay, having a good time in the 20's. Listen.

AUSTIN Another topic for attending a private, white college. All the football players are from the south side. It was just, eating all the food. I remember the first time, because I hadn't been to Chicago



before I applied to go to the school, I just knew I was supposed to be in Chicago, and so my dad took me to finally do the tour or whatever and we are diving down Foster Ave-

LUVVIE Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN ... and back then it was Swedish restaurant, a Mexican restaurant, a Subway, a Thai restaurant, and a breakfast place, and my dad was looking like, "What neighborhood is this? How are all these different restaurants on one street." I feel like that encapsulates how Chicago shaped me. That it gave me access to a level of diversity that I had never experienced before.

LUVVIE So you graduated from college. First job. What was your first job?

AUSTIN Oh God. My senior year in college, I meet the guy who's going to be my husband, and he hates Chicago. Hates it, Luvvie. I'm a graduating senior thinking, "I never thought I would leave Chicago, but if I'm serious about this relationship, I might have to go."

LUVVIE Snap.

AUSTIN And I left, Luvvie, I left. I moved to Michigan and my first job was an administrative assistant. It was awful. It was awful, awful. It was like, "Black woman who was hired to be one thing but now I find myself putting toilet paper in the bathrooms."

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN One of those situations.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN "Anything that we don't want to do, we'll have the Black girl do." It was terrible. And then I became a fundraiser for Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN And that was great. It was amazing.

LUVVIE What then had you say, "You know what, this is what I'm supposed to be doing." How did you transition to where you are now?

AUSTIN Yeah. This theme of racial justice just winds through my whole story. Especially being in the Black neighborhood.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN And having this "ah-hah" moment that the way white culture does things is just one way, not the best way, not the holy way, but just a way. All the way through high school when there's the gospel choir and the glee club. Black gospel choir, white glee club get treated very differently. Funding is different.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN Accolades are different. Access to opportunities is different. And then in college I take this trip called Sankofa, where we take a three-day trip down through the South and child, I went on this trip three times, but my first time, girl. Our first stop was at a plantation.

LUVVIE Oh no.

AUSTIN Girl. And the white tour guides, their families had grown up on the plantation, girl. So they were in love with their little plantation. It was so bad that the Black students thought it was satire at first because the tour guides had so romanticized their family. Girl. We got back on that bus and the second stop was to a lynching museum.

LUVVIE No, no, no. I just stay on the bus. I'll just be like, "You know what, y'all just [inaudible 00:26:28]. Keep me on. I'll be on the bus."

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE "When you all get back on, I'll be all right. I'll be right here." No.

AUSTIN Back then there was no "lynching museum," right? Bryan Stevenson hadn't built what is now the only museum that [crosstalk 00:26:40] the lynchers.

LUVVIE The one that actually honors it, right?

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE As opposed to make it a tourist activity.

AUSTIN Right, okay? This was a traveling exhibit that happened to be in Jackson, Mississippi, and we walked through that thing and absolute silence because it's so heavy, Luvvie, it's so heavy. We get back on that bus, child, and the white people start going, "You know, listen, my family wasn't here yet."

LUVVIE That's where I knew this was going.

AUSTIN You're right. They're like-

LUVVIE I was like, "Absolutely, they was going..." Oh God, that's why I'm like, "Nope, just leave me on this bus, because I'm not... Nope." No.

AUSTIN They're like, as much distance as I can get. Right? And then a Black woman gets up, Luvvie, and I can't remember if she's a junior or senior, but she's like 5'9, and she has this long, cascading hair, so when she stands up, it's regal. It's like "that Black woman." You just go, "Ghu ghu ghu ghu, ding!" And she gets up and, Luvvie, she says in the quietest voice, "You know, I'm just convinced that white people are just innately evil."

LUVVIE Well, wow. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN "They're just innately evil, and I'm not even blaming you for it. It's just history has proven."

LUVVIE Dang.

AUSTIN "That you rape and you steal and you kill and you... Everywhere-"

LUVVIE I mean, she's not wrong. Is she wrong? Where are the lies at? I have not spotted a lie.

AUSTIN Girl, that's what made it so tight.

LUVVIE That bus ride. Oh God, you all could have said that.

AUSTIN That was so [crosstalk 00:28:16] Everybody was sitting there like, "just don't move. Just don't move. Just don't move." Girl, it was a trip. But for all the craziness, and it got real crazy because that was day one of three.

LUVVIE Lord, you'd have probably been like, "Whoa, this is awkward."

AUSTIN Girl, I was never been so happy to get off a bus in my whole life. But, it did spark something in me. It sparked a desire, one for the truth to be told.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN It made me realize how even though I had been so intentional, Luvvie, about knowing Black history, and my parents were intentionally about us knowing Black American history, that there was still so much shit I didn't know.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN And that bothered me. And then I was going to this private, white Christian school that claimed, their motto was that they were, essentially proud of their multiculturalism, that they wanted to be a multicultural school, that they were in Chicago, so they weren't like all these other private, Christian schools that are in the suburbs or in some rural area. They're in the city. And I was like, "I see. That's going to cost you." I was like, "If that's how we going to roll, then I'm going to need feel like a whole student."

LUVVIE Well.

AUSTIN Yeah. And then, crazy, when I got off the bus, I had a phone call waiting for me, it was a voicemail from a woman named Brenda Salter McNeil, and Brenda Salter McNeil, excuse me, was a minister who preached about women in leadership and racial justice, and I became her administrative assistant.

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN So I ran her business and negotiated her contracts and put all my little business management skills to use as my first job in college, and I stayed with her my entire college career.

LUVVIE Wow. So all of that was basically prepping you for where you are now.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE You end up as an administrative assistant.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE For the crazy people in Michigan.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE But you end up writing this book.

AUSTIN White people are exhausting, Luvvie.

LUVVIE Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE Yeah. Your book came out a few years ago.

AUSTIN It did. It came out in 2018.

LUVVIE Y'all Austin Channing Brown's book, okay, because I need you to type her name in, because if you type her name in, literally all her stuff comes up, including the book, which you should get, which I assume you've already gotten, you know what I mean? What spurred you to write it when you wrote it? Why did you think it was necessary at that moment?

AUSTIN I tried to write it write around when Trayvon Martin was murdered. I was working at yet another white, Christian space and was losing myself quickly, realizing I was not the white culture whisperer that I thought I was, and wanted to write a book that was about our experience as Black women who are trying to navigate whiteness, and I pitched it to an editor, and an editor said to me, "You want to write a memoir about white women touching your hair?" And I was like, "Yes. Yes, that is absolutely correct." And she was like, "No one will read it." She was like, "You're not famous, nothing extraordinary happens, you weren't on drugs, you didn't fall off a mountain. No body's going to read this."

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN And I was like, "Well that sucks." I wrote a blog. I got on my computer and wrote a blog for four years, once a week for almost four years, and then the editors came knocking on my door.

LUVVIE Amen.

AUSTIN And by then, Ta-Nehisi Coates book *Between the World and Me* had come out. Roxane Gay had skyrocketed. We had Black Lives Matter all across our TVs. Ferguson was jumping off. Quite frankly, the world had changed in those three years between being told, "no," and people seeking me out, and so, yeah, by the time I finished the book proposal, I had 10 offers on the book and she was born.

LUVVIE The book is, [\*I'm Still Here. Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness\*](#). Your book did well when it came out.

AUSTIN It did. It did just great. I had a book tour that was filled with 500, 600, 700 people at every stop. It was fantastic, but it ain't what it is today.

LUVVIE Right because your book, two years. Two years?

AUSTIN Two years, Luvvie.

LUVVIE After coming out rushes to the top of the bestseller list.

AUSTIN Can I just give a testimony.

LUVVIE Please, please, please.

AUSTIN Because I'm a Black girl who was told no, that nobody would ever read it, have a book that I'm super proud of that does really well, the advance allows me to take a year off when I get pregnant so that I don't have to go back to work, and really launches me into doing this full time. It's good Luvvie, I have no complaints, none. And then two years later, I am in my car driving. My husband was driving. I am on my phone and I get an email that says, "Hey, Austin, we just wanted to let you know that Reese Witherspoon has chosen your book, and she's going to announce it in three days."

LUVVIE Come on. Did they even have the stock for that demand?

AUSTIN No, no. It was already out. So Reese Witherspoon had to say, "We know you've got to wait for this book, but we promise it's worth the wait."

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN Girl, that don't happen.

LUVVIE Look at Jesus. Come on, look at God. Look. The stone that the builder rejected. What. Isn't that what they said? The stone that the builder rejected. What? Isn't that the cheaper one's stone?

AUSTIN Listen, Black women, I'm going to need for you to wait for your harvest. It's coming.

LUVVIE Listen.

AUSTIN Wait for it, wait for it.

LUVVIE And you went to the top.

AUSTIN It just might happen, Luvvie. It just might happen during a pandemic.

LUVVIE How about it? Because here's the thing is, there might be a lot of famine happening around, but people are still being blessed in different ways.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE This pandemic is definitely teaching me that and I was watching as the book was-

AUSTIN It just kept going. It was like, "What is happening right now? How did I get to a place where my book is on the New York Times bestsellers list next to Ta-Nehisi Coates?"

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah. That happened.

AUSTIN That happened.

LUVVIE That happened and that's epic, and it's deserved. And you know a lot of times people get discouraged-

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE ... when they get the first no, and they're thinking, "No man, listen."

AUSTIN You got to trust your voice right?

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN You got to trust, especially as writers-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... you have to trust that you actually do know more than the industry knows.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Because I knew that Black women would drink up our stories.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN            There was no doubt in my mind. Black women don't need me to have a drug problem. Black women don't need me to have fallen off a cliff. In fact, if I did fall off a cliff, they would have a whole lot of questions.

LUVVIE            Yes.

AUSTIN            They would be like, "Wait, what?"

LUVVIE            Yes, like, "Where's your soft spot?"

AUSTIN            "What is wrong with you?"

LUVVIE            Like, "What happened?"

AUSTIN            "Why were you are on a cliff?"

LUVVIE            Exactly. "Who took you hiking? Who let you go hiking? Why?"

AUSTIN            Right? We don't need all that.

LUVVIE            Wow.

AUSTIN            We don't need all that.

LUVVIE            Wow. Yeah, no, I saw that.

AUSTIN            It's like, [Lovecraft Country](#) where the scariest thing isn't actually the monster, the scariest thing is the white people.

LUVVIE            The scariest thing is the truth.

AUSTIN            Right?

LUVVIE            Because sometimes the truth is scarier than anything else you can come up with in any fiction. Just tell the truth about race in America and you have a horror movie.

AUSTIN            Listen. Listen.

LUVVIE            That's literally all you have to do. That is what Jordan Peele was like, "Huh, all I got to do is just tell the truth about racism."

AUSTIN            Listen, listen.

LUVVIE            "And they'll be scared shitless." Yes, because all the shit is trash.

AUSTIN            That's all I did, Luvvie. I just wrote a book about our story.

LUVVIE Crazy, yo. And then we did "Share the Mic Now." All of it was happening around the same time too.

AUSTIN Luvvie.

LUVVIE All of it.

AUSTIN It was bananas. I already had an interview scheduled with Brené. So, two days after I hit the New York Times best sellers list, I'm being interviewed by Brené.

LUVVIE Heck yeah.

AUSTIN And then you and Glennon put us together for a... It was crazy.

LUVVIE It was nuts. It was all nuts. All of it was crazy. As this madness is all happening, what is your day-to-day looking like? Were you just sitting at home being like, "I don't understand."

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE Wow.

AUSTIN I was just drinking chocolate shakes like, "This is happening. This is a thing." It was weird. Wonderful. I'll never forget it. I'll never forget the summer of 2020.

LUVVIE I need people to understand, first of all, being on the New York Times bestselling list is already a massive feat, right? Already massive.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE And y'all might think it's something easy because you start to seeing a lot more Black woman end up on it. That wasn't happening five years ago, let's keep that in mind, please. Please realize that literally five years ago, this wasn't a thing. To end up on New York Times bestselling List. Weren't you number one or number two or number three? In the top five?

AUSTIN I made it to four. Number four.

LUVVIE In the top five. You end up in the New York Times bestselling list. In the top five. Two years after your project dropped.

AUSTIN Two years.

LUVVIE That doesn't happen unless you're like J.K. Rowling or Brené Brown.

AUSTIN Right, right.

LUVVIE It don't happen.



AUSTIN It doesn't happen.

LUVVIE And it happened for you. And what did you take away from it?

AUSTIN Oh my God. You know, the thing that I kept saying when I originally wrote, I wrote [\*I'm Still Here\*](#) while I was pregnant and while I was working a full-time job as a resident director for 240 18 and 19-year-olds.

LUVVIE Oh God.

AUSTIN Okay.

LUVVIE Bless you.

AUSTIN That was my life while writing this book.

LUVVIE Bless you.

AUSTIN And I remember saying to my mom and my editor, all I want is for it to be a good book. I want it to sound good to your ear, I want it to read well, and I just want it to be a good book. I just want to do something that I don't have any shame, any regrets. This is the book that I'm proud of. And there was a moment when we got this current administration, and my editor was like, "Do you want to add a chapter about this?" And I-

LUVVIE You know I did that. For my hardcover.

AUSTIN Did you?

LUVVIE I ended up doing that. I added a bonus chapter to my hardcover because I was like, "Yeah, I probably should."

AUSTIN I said, "No." I was like, "No, I don't want to do it." I said, "I don't want to do it," because I don't want, one, I don't want this book to become about him.

LUVVIE That part too.

AUSTIN Two, one day he will come to an end because we don't have kings in this country.

LUVVIE No.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE Not yet. We going to go pray about it. We going to pray about November.

AUSTIN Okay. And the third thing that I said to him, Luvvie, was "I want the book to be evergreen."

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN "I don't want it to be dated. I want it to be evergreen." And that was the first thought that came to mind, that this book is on the New York Times bestsellers list.

LUVVIE Yep.

AUSTIN Two years later.

LUVVIE Yep. You're right. You're writing timeless but always still timely because-

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE Right? Timeless-

AUSTIN And that's what I'm most proud of.

LUVVIE That's it.

AUSTIN That's what I'm most proud of.

LUVVIE That's it. Timeless works will always outlast anything else.

AUSTIN Yeah.

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Rants fam – if you haven't joined us in LuvvNation and become a LuvvCousin yet, well, I need to know what you're waiting for. LuvvNation is my free community that is a safe space in a dumpster fire world! [LuvvNation](#) is 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 need to stop sitting on this and come to LuvvNation.com and get signed up. Or download the LuvvNation app in the App Store or on Android and come through that way. Ok – back to the podcast.

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LUVVIE How are your DM's looking?

AUSTIN Oh God.

LUVVIE What were your DM's looking like with all the new white allies?

AUSTIN Let me tell you about one I got yesterday.

LUVVIE Oh God.

AUSTIN I got one yesterday from a white guy who apparently loves basketball.

LUVVIE Oh no.

AUSTIN And there's a white basketball player who just recently came out in support of Black Lives Matter, saying that he has learned so much from being in the bubble because he has to spend so much time with Black basketball players, and the man suggested that I contact whoever this white guy is to write a book putting all the stories of the Black guys together because those are the stories that are actually going to move white America.

LUVVIE Make it make sense. Make it make sense.

AUSTIN I can't tell you how much I wanted to write back, "Sure, I'll just call LeBron right now." Just, "I'll get right on that."

LUVVIE Make it make sense, okay? Bless it. I just can't. I can't. And I think we're in an interesting time too because everybody's like, "Listen to Black women," all of a sudden, as if we haven't been talking for all this time, but whatever. How are you not losing your mind in the midst of all of this, because now that everyone thinks Austin is their new Black best friend.

AUSTIN Oh God, it's a lot.

LUVVIE What do you-

AUSTIN Well first of all I'm honest that there aren't applications for being my friend open right now.

LUVVIE No new friends.

AUSTIN No new friends. And white people in particular. You have a whole application to feel out, I need a cover letter, I need references.

LUVVIE Yes, I need references. All that.

AUSTIN You know what I mean? It's a very long process. It's six month's probation.

LUVVIE Oh yeah, we got to put you in... Yes.

AUSTIN You know?

LUVVIE You need a probationary period. We got to check who all going to be there. You need your version of who all going to be there. Who vouches for you? Who the people who say you actually worth inviting to any conversation? Who all going to be there?

AUSTIN I need evidence.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN I require. I require.

LUVVIE That's real. That's real.

AUSTIN That has, honestly, it's been really helpful.

LUVVIE Yep.

AUSTIN I have been leaning into the friend groups that I already have, those who were here when I was still writing, [\*I'm Still Here\*](#). Those who were here when I got told that I would never write a book and they was like, "That's fine, get you a Twitter account, because we're about to spread everything you write."

LUVVIE Part. That part.

AUSTIN You know what I mean? The people who have been down forever. My husband has been amazing. Truth be told, my toddler keeps me quite grounded.

LUVVIE Okay, because kids will check you.

AUSTIN Listen you don't care... Although, Luvvie, I will say, the other day, I was just scrolling through the photos on my phone and my book popped up in one of the pictures, and he was like, "Mommy book?" And I was like...

LUVVIE He recognized it. Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE Which also, baby affirmations, best affirmations ever.

AUSTIN Best.

LUVVIE Okay, they're shady boots. Babies are the shadiest people.

AUSTIN Child.

LUVVIE Which is why, when they approve something you did...

AUSTIN It matters.

LUVVIE It matters because they don't like anything. So yes, you just got the best complement of the year.

AUSTIN Okay, okay. Yeah, so there are lots of ways that I find myself staying grounded, but I'll be honest, Luvvie, I tried. I tried really hard to shut out the noise-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... that was happening because of the uprisings, because of Reese, because of the New York Times.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN Brené, all these things just collided at once and I thought I was doing a great job of keeping all the voices at bay, except Luvvie, a few months into all of this happening, I realized that I had tried to start a Podcast, I had started a newsletter. Do you know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN I was like, "Wait a minute, maybe I'm not ignoring all the voices."

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN Because I feel like, I'm doing a whole lot around here that I did not plan to do prior.

LUVVIE Because you want to jump on the momentum and people be like, "So what do you want to do now? What do you do now? What do you do now?"

AUSTIN And that's everybody's next question, right? So what's the next project?

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN I be like, "I don't know, I'm in a pandemic too, y'all." [crosstalk 00:45:40].

LUVVIE Exactly. Yo. Come on, dog. Yo. That's hilarious.

AUSTIN "I'm in a pandemic too." So I have had to slow myself down.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN And be honest, Luvvie, that I don't want to do anti-racism work the way that everybody else does. Even though the way everybody else does it is sexy. Okay? Dr. Kendi getting 10 million dollars to have an anti-racism center.

LUVVIE That's sexy.

AUSTIN That is sexy as hell.

LUVVIE Yes, that's sexy.

AUSTIN Okay. All right. All these online trainings and IG sessions. [crosstalk 00:46:15].

LUVVIE There's so many. There's so many. Can I just say there's so many.

AUSTIN           And they have great titles and I just be like, "If you come-"

LUVVIE           Great branding.

AUSTIN           Right? A + on the marketing.

LUVVIE           There's a lot.

AUSTIN           You know.

LUVVIE           I was in a lot of anti-racist trainings. A lot. I've just been like...

AUSTIN           Stop, Luvvie.

LUVVIE           No shade. No shade.

AUSTIN           Right? Discussions.

LUVVIE           But I'm just like, "There's a lot happening."

AUSTIN           Conversation. It's a lot, child. And some part of me was trying to keep up. Some part of me was trying to keep up, but the truth is, Luvvie, I want to talk to Black women about the ways we have to navigate racism. And I want to make that so crystal clear that the white people who are listening can begin to recognize it right where they live. Right where they work.

LUVVIE           You know-

AUSTIN           Right where they are a supervisor.

LUVVIE           There's a word in here that I want us to draw down in one.

AUSTIN           Yes, let's.

LUVVIE           This piece about how this thing that you've been doing for a bit has now become trendy.

AUSTIN           It's super weird.

LUVVIE           And because of it, it's so weird.

AUSTIN           It's super weird, yes.

LUVVIE           Because of it, there's a lot of things attached to it right? There's a lot of opportunity to monetize and capitalize and really get on major stages and then you found yourself having to be like, "this is not the way I want to do it even though if I was to do it in this way, I'd make a lot of money to do it in this way.

AUSTIN           I know.

LUVVIE Or I get a lot of attention." And I feel that deeply because, when the thing that you do and have done deeply for a long time or in a way, basically, when the baby gets out the house, basically, starts running.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE You're just like, "I got to chase it. I got to chase it." It's like, "Do you?" Even this is real because, even with #ShareTheMicNow.

AUSTIN That's right. That's right.

LUVVIE That shit blew up.

AUSTIN Blew up.

LUVVIE I'm talking like, we were not expecting all of that.

AUSTIN Yeah, yeah.

LUVVIE And everybody was like, "Okay, so when's the next one? All right."

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE "So can I do a big one?"

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE "Can I work? Can my brand do it?"

AUSTIN I saw people asking like, "Can we have a doctor one? Can we have a sociology one?"

LUVVIE They even stop asking. People stop asking.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE People didn't even ask no more. We were just like, "You know what?" I was like, "I can't chase the baby. I'm officially overwhelmed by the baby. Let the baby run out. I don't care. Let it get hit by a bus. I don't care." I was like, "I don't-"

AUSTIN No.

LUVVIE "I can't. That's a lie."

AUSTIN Nope.

LUVVIE You know what? Yeah, no.

AUSTIN It's not my work.

LUVVIE You just have to have that come to Jesus moment.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE Right?

AUSTIN It's not my work.

LUVVIE You have to have a come to Jesus moment with yourself. You're like, "Yeah, I can definitely get more press and I can definitely do this thing and I can definitely turn it into a massive organization."

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE "But is that what you want?"

AUSTIN But could isn't should.

LUVVIE Could is not should.

AUSTIN Could isn't should.

LUVVIE That's it.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE Could is not should.

AUSTIN And that's what I had to come back to. Could I start a podcast? Yes. Should I? Probably not.

LUVVIE Is that what would bring you joy.

AUSTIN No.

LUVVIE Will it bring you money? Yes.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE Will it bring you joy? "eh."

AUSTIN Mm-mm (negative).

LUVVIE That probably, we're not sure about.

AUSTIN I would be the biggest flake ever, Luvvie.



LUVVIE Nothing.

AUSTIN It takes everything I got to be on your podcast.

LUVVIE Listen.

AUSTIN What I look like trying to put a show on-

LUVVIE Start your own.

AUSTIN ... of my own.

LUVVIE Listen.

AUSTIN I should not do that.

LUVVIE One of my friends, Eunique, I was talking about the other week, and she said to me... Because her and I have the same problem.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE We have all these big ideas.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE We want to do a thousand things.

AUSTIN Yes, yes, yes.

LUVVIE I mean, the ideas are really good.

AUSTIN Yes, I know.

LUVVIE And we're just like, "Yeah, this is amazing, we should totally do this." And then we both realize that we enable each other to do too much. She's my friend who puts a battery in my back and be like, "Go do that thing, do it now."

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE I'm that friend for her too. And then we both were like, we need other friends who would tell us "Stop it, stop it, stop it. You're being crazy right now. You have too much on your plate already. You need to balance." Right?

AUSTIN It's so true.

LUVVIE And she said her mentor said-

AUSTIN It is so true. [crosstalk 00:50:35]

LUVVIE ... "If you chase two rabbits, you will catch none."

AUSTIN Yes. Well.

LUVVIE "If you chase one rabbit, you will catch that one."

AUSTIN Hello.

LUVVIE So we all constantly chasing eight rabbits. Wonder why we stressed out.

AUSTIN And you know what else, Luvvie? I'm just going to tell you the whole truth.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN I am really into television. I did this web series called "This Next Question"

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN And we interviewed Nicole Hannah Jones and Brené Brown and Jasmine Guillory.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN And Rachel Cargle and it was fan-freaking-tastic, and this summer we were supposed to do season two.

LUVVIE And then what happened?

AUSTIN Hello, pandemic.

LUVVIE The way your life was set up.

AUSTIN Yes, listen, okay. So now I feel like, what should I do with all this creative energy? I'm rocking back and forth.

LUVVIE You're like, "What should I start next?"

AUSTIN What should I start?

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN Right? And so I'm learning that just because I have all this creative energy still doesn't mean that I get to chase three rabbits.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Because the one rabbit that I want isn't accessible to me right now.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN And I have to stay focused and committed and plan and fundraise. Do other things. Do the other things.

LUVVIE Well here's the thing, you can be chasing that rabbit even if it's not.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE Public facing chasing it, right?

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE You can be chasing the rabbit quietly and planning and being like, "Okay, what do I want season two to look like?"

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE On [The Next Question](#). "What do we want? What guest do we want?" Do you know what I mean? You can be chasing that rabbit, and I had to tell my team. I pulled back on a major project and we were about to launch. Pulled on a major project, and I was like, "[inaudible 00:52:21] because we're trying to chase too many rabbits."

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE "We would not serve people the way we should.

AUSTIN Right, right.

LUVVIE If we move forward." And I realized, "Okay, for the next six months, the rabbit I need to chase is my second book that's coming out in six months."

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE That is the only rabbit I need to focus on. Whatever I'm doing, is it helping to chase this rabbit? If it's not, stop it, focus.

AUSTIN I shut down the podcast.

LUVVIE Listen.

AUSTIN I shut down my newsletter until 2021. I just told everybody it ain't happening. And I had already made the announcement, Luvvie. I was like, "Here's what we finna do with this newsletter," and two days later I was like, "Oh actually..."

LUVVIE "Yeah, about that, nevermind, we not going to do that."

AUSTIN We not going to do it at all.

LUVVIE But I also want to have people honored. This year I've had to cancel two major things.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE After I'd announced it publicly.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE You must not be afraid to pivot if that is the best move for that moment.

AUSTIN If that's what's best. That's right, that's right.

LUVVIE Do not just go forward because you're like, "Well, I already told people." Is this the best? You have the right to change your mind if you reassess the situation and go, "You know what-

AUSTIN That's right.

LUVVIE ... that's not the best thing for right now." Doesn't mean that you are shelving it forever. Doesn't mean the rabbit won't come back.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE Chase that rabbit afterwards. I feel like our problem, especially as Black women-

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE ... and especially with this grind culture that were all enmeshed in.

AUSTIN Yes, yes.

LUVVIE Okay. Enmeshed.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE Is that we're constantly feeling like, "If we take days off, tomorrow they'll forget us." I haven't been on social media in four days because I was like, "I'm sitting on the couch."

AUSTIN Look at you.

LUVVIE I was like, "I'm sitting on the couch this weekend and binge-watching TV for no reason."

AUSTIN Excellent.

LUVVIE But we are in a constant grind culture that's telling us we have to have eight newsletters.

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE That's telling us we have to have eight podcasts.

AUSTIN That's right.

LUVVIE That's why I'm literally like, "What is the things that is bringing me joy?" The reason why I do this podcast because I love doing this podcast.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE I love having these conversations and the things that come out of it. But if it gets to the point where I'm just like, "Okay."

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE I'll take a break.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE And I did take a break when I was exhausted because last year I was also planning my wedding. I took a three month break off doing-

AUSTIN Right, right, right.

LUVVIE Girl, I was planning a wedding, I was over here writing book proposals.

AUSTIN That's right.

LUVVIE I was in eight different things. Chasing 15 rabbits. I caught a couple, but damn.

AUSTIN But listen Luvvie, we was all right here ready when you came back, right?

LUVVIE Correct. Correct.

AUSTIN We was all right here ready.

LUVVIE Correct.

AUSTIN Like, "We'll be here. We'll be here when you get back."

LUVVIE So when you decide to do season two-

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE ... of [The Next Question](#)-

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE ... folks will be like, "Great."

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE So glad it's back.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE Well we get no pressures doing it.

AUSTIN Part of this, that's right, part of this is not having a scarcity mindset, right?

LUVVIE Mm-hmm (affirmative).

AUSTIN That if I don't do this right now, it's never going to exist. And we have to believe in the people who support us, we have to believe in our own magic that catalytic moments that are out of our control absolutely happen.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN They absolutely happen.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN That is the magic that keeps us all starry eyed.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN But that isn't the magic that keeps us going.

LUVVIE Yes. And we have to be clear about our compass.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE Because there's going to be many opportunities to be distracted. Many things I'm sure. I'm sure you've gotten all types of emails and offers of, "Oh my God." And they look shiny, right? You're like, "Oh that's so cool." I call it the shiny penny syndrome. It's like, "Yeah. That's great." I also call it squirreling because I'm like, you know, neck is going back and forth.

AUSTIN Yes, yes. Look at that squirrel, look at that squirrel.

LUVVIE "That's cool. I can do that too. That sounds great." Does it make sense? My default now is no.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE My default is no and that I have to be excited for it to get me to yes.

AUSTIN Yes, yeah.

LUVVIE Then I say yes and I'm like, "All right cool." Because we can get distracted so often, so easy.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE Especially in these moments where our names are in the lights, right? We get 50,000 new followers in two days and girl.

AUSTIN Right, Luvvie.

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN When the pandemic started-

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN ... I was just trying to get to 50K. That was my goal.

LUVVIE On [Instagram](#)? And now you're at 389,000? You've gotten 350,000 new followers in six months? Wow.

AUSTIN Okay, and somewhere in my head I wanted to pretend like, "It don't matter, it's like whatever." But that is some pressure.

LUVVIE That is some pressure. You're like, "Jesus."

AUSTIN I got some pressure.

LUVVIE Wow. Yes.

AUSTIN I have decided that from now until the end of the year, it's about a next book proposal.

LUVVIE Yeah.

AUSTIN It's about showing up for the events that I have already committed to.

LUVVIE Yep.

AUSTIN That's it.

LUVVIE Nothing else. That's it.

AUSTIN Planning, dreaming, thinking.

LUVVIE That's it, that's it, that's it.

AUSTIN Having a good, rich, deep conversations, but the only public-facing thing that I am committing to right now are the events that I've already agreed to. Everything else is fading into the background right now.

LUVVIE Yo.

AUSTIN It's about to be winter. You know what I mean?

LUVVIE Nobody got time to be running around.

AUSTIN It's time to hibernate.

LUVVIE Hibernate.

AUSTIN Hibernate.

LUVVIE Just get your energy together.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE This is actually, also inspiring me to double down on that because I'm like, "Okay, when the book comes out..." You know book promo's crazy.

AUSTIN Yes, yes.

LUVVIE I should probably conserve my energy for the next three months because I'm going to need it in the beginning of 2021 when I have to do hella book promo.

AUSTIN That's right.

LUVVIE So I've been getting all these podcast interview requests-

AUSTIN Yep, yep.

LUVVIE ... and all these press things. And I just been like, "No, can we just do it next year because I need to clear my calendar."

AUSTIN And I feel like there's a huge increase of them because we're all virtual.



LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Right, Luvvie?

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Because before people had to actually plan a whole event with chairs and shit.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Yeah.

LUVVIE Venues and shit. Yes.

AUSTIN Right, you know what I'm saying? They had to rent some things, they had to put a space together.

LUVVIE Right. Fly you there.

AUSTIN I could [crosstalk 00:58:01] myself. Right now. It might be two weeks people are like, "I got this event that I'm doing." I'm like...

LUVVIE Yeah, no. You're right. I think for me for the rest of the year, I'm committing to my podcast.

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE Coming up with this massive launch strategy for this book.

AUSTIN Yes, yes.

LUVVIE Because listen, I'm over here claiming that I'm one New York Times best seller amen, in Jesus' name.

AUSTIN Obvi, obvi.

LUVVIE Amen. So yeah, and just, basically relegating everything else. Not now.

AUSTIN Not now.

LUVVIE It's not a complete no, it's a "not now."

AUSTIN I know.

LUVVIE And honoring that.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE Because that is what allows me to now focus and be able to double down on-

AUSTIN Exactly.

LUVVIE ... what matters.

AUSTIN Yep.

LUVVIE Creative energy's limitless but burn out happens-

AUSTIN Okay.

LUVVIE ... and you're like, "I can't go nothing."

AUSTIN Nothing.

LUVVIE We need to find a way to not be burnt out. The reason that I follow [The Nap Ministry](#), do you follow that account?

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE I'm obsessed. I'm obsessed. She be like, "Just rest."

AUSTIN Bless God for [The Nap Ministry](#).

LUVVIE I love that [Nap Ministry](#) account.

AUSTIN Also, Luvvie, let me tell you, I now, since the pandemic, schedule everything in the mornings or in the late afternoon so that I have the option of taking a nap every day.

LUVVIE I need to do that. Just like, in case I just feel like taking a nap.

AUSTIN In case.

LUVVIE I don't have to take a nap but I can just sit on the couch.

AUSTIN If I want to. I don't do anything. Everything has to be done by noon, and I will start again by two.

LUVVIE Nice. A nice mid-day breather.

AUSTIN Listen, because I'm like, I might need to eat. I might need to eat. And then I might need to fall asleep. I might need to get cozy first.

LUVVIE You know what-

AUSTIN I might need the air conditioning to kick on so I can pull on all the covers.

LUVVIE        What.

AUSTIN        I might need those things.

LUVVIE        That's it, I'm telling my assistant to clear my schedule better. I just... mm-mm (negative). Mm-mm (negative). Listen. Let me tell you. The way I'm about to be on zen mode, and the other day I got acupuncture for the first time ever.

AUSTIN        Did you love it? I've never done it before.

LUVVIE        Okay.

AUSTIN        I have a girlfriend that says when she gets it done, she sleeps like never before.

LUVVIE        Austin.

AUSTIN        Yeah.

LUVVIE        Let me tell you something right now. I'm doing it again in a couple of weeks.

AUSTIN        That's amazing.

LUVVIE        Oh my God. It zenned me out so much that that day, I think somebody called me upset about something, and they were venting to me. Typically I would be like, "Yeah, that's kind of messed up." I was like, "Word?" I was like, "Oh, man." Yo, it zenned me out.

AUSTIN        That's amazing, man.

LUVVIE        I'm going to do it again. I might actually make this a regular thing.

AUSTIN        You should, you should.

LUVVIE        Because I'm literally like, "You know what, life is too... mm-mm (negative)." All of the whole burn out, all of the whole being exhausted, I'm over it. I'm over it completely. I'm not here to prove nothing to nobody. Okay?

AUSTIN        You know what Brené Brown said to me the other day? I was telling her. What was I telling her about? Something that I needed to stop doing or figure out or basically this conversation. And she was like... It was taking a vacation because all the things had happened, and I was like "Can I take a vacation? I don't know if I should take a vacation. What if Oprah calls? Right?" And then we go...

LUVVIE        Oprah will call again.

AUSTIN        And she said, "Austin, I'm tired of watching women burn out because we believe that we had to do it all right now."

LUVVIE We don't, we don't. We do not.

AUSTIN We don't.

LUVVIE Listen, I'm on that right now. I'm on that kick where I'm just like, "How do I structure my business in a way where I'm not stressed out?"

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE "How do I not over commit myself?"

AUSTIN Yes.

LUVVIE And here's the thing is, the things that we're saying yes to are things we love, we want to do all of it.

AUSTIN Right, right. It's true.

LUVVIE But it's like, when we go to the candy store-

AUSTIN Right.

LUVVIE ... you pick out the piece of candy, it's delicious, you're loving it as you're eating it. But you ate too much candy, now you got a stomachache. You had a great time while you were eating it. Now you have a stomachache. So I'm just like-

AUSTIN And you know what else Luvvie? I'm trying to make sure that I don't take what belongs to somebody else.

LUVVIE Another word that I... Come on, we don't talk about that.

AUSTIN Right? Right, because every time I say no, that's giving another person an opportunity to do what they love too. Right?

LUVVIE I've never heard it in that way, yes.

AUSTIN It gives me so much joy to be like, "You know what, I can't do it but here are four Black women that I think you should reach out to."

LUVVIE That part.

AUSTIN Right?

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN That's a blessing to me too.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN Because now, I ain't got to do it and another Black woman's going to get paid. I'll take that.

LUVVIE Facts.

AUSTIN I'll take that.

LUVVIE That's a win. That's a win. Yes. Being able to be like, "I know somebody. I know the right person for you. Go to the person."

AUSTIN "Go right over there."

LUVVIE That's it. I'm so tired of this grind culture. I'm so tired of the... I follow this one person on Instagram who, no actually more than one person on Instagram who, even on Sundays is posting about business. "What have you done today to earn some money?" And I'm just like, "What, nothing. I'm sleeping."

AUSTIN Nothing.

LUVVIE "Why are we doing this? Why all this pressure? I don't need all this in my life. This is stressful." I'm tired of us-

AUSTIN It's white supremacy. Can I get all my racial justice for three seconds?

LUVVIE Do it, do it.

AUSTIN That is white supremacy. This idea that you and I got to work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, and then work some more. Does that sound familiar?

LUVVIE It's capitalism which is based in white supremacy.

AUSTIN We are whole human beings and we are deserving of joy and pleasure and rest.

LUVVIE Rest.

AUSTIN And happiness.

LUVVIE Yes.

AUSTIN And smelling the flowers and frolicking. I saw this photo on IG the other day of a Black man who was like, "I can't believe you all didn't tell me about this frolicking."

LUVVIE Yes. I saw that, it was amazing. He was like, "Have you frolicked?" I'm like, "Yes."

AUSTIN Yes, we need to frolic more. Thank you for that reminder, bro.

LUVVIE            We need to frolic more.

AUSTIN            That we need to frolic more.

Yo, Austin is incredible. That conversation energized my spirit. I love what she's doing and how she's moving through this world. She dropped some gems, y'all, she dropped some gems. That whole piece why it's important to say no because it gives someone else a yes is a whole gem.

Be sure to follow Austin on social media. She's @AustinChanning on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Make sure you comment and give her love about what she said on this podcast. Y'all know my guests they be showing up on this podcast, donating their time, you know blessing us with their presence. Give them some love and you definitely need to check out season 1 of her web series [The Next Question](#) at [tnqshow.com](#).

Much love to Chicago Recording Company, who I've been partnering with from the start of this podcast and they help me bring the radio voice to y'all.

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