



Rants & Randomness with Luvvie Ajayi Jones

Keep Going (with Cari Champion) - Episode 52

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Hey, y'all! 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. And sometimes, I talk about things that are on my spirit.

But before we get into today's episode, I have a request. If you value this show, if you value the guests and their stories, the lessons the wisdom and inspiration we bring to you. If you think of me as your friend in your head, which I am, because you know, we go together, I am just talking to you right now because I need you. And you can do that by supporting what I do in preordering my next book [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#), I'm so excited because it comes out on March 2, 2021, and it is filled with lessons I've learned about my life. About how my journey is a series of me committing to doing the things that scare me over and over again. My life's testimony is committing to doing things that feel bigger than me. And this book is full of these gems. So if you love this show, and what I do, what you learn here, the people that I've had on, if you love my TED Talk, which is called Getting Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable. If you love who I am in this world, you're gonna love this book, [Professional Troublemaker](#). It is currently available for preorder wherever you get your books - shout out to the independent bookstores - you can go to professionaltroublemakerbook.com go pre-order your copy. And yeah, it's epic.

Today I'm talking to the incredible Cari Champion. Cari's a veteran TV journalist covering network news, entertainment, and sports for ABC, CBS, NBC, and other cable networks. She worked for nearly a decade at ESPN, where she served as a SportsCenter anchor and host of ESPN Two's First Take. Most recently, Cari made history with her [move to VICE TV](#), working alongside co-host and former guest of this podcast, Jemele Hill, as the first Black woman to host a late-night cable show.

She's also the co-host for [NBC's The Titan Games](#), an athletic competition show with Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson. And she just launched a podcast called [The Brownprint](#) in partnership with Estee Lauder. During our conversation, we're talking about her growing up, how she moved up the ranks and got to ESPN, and being a Black woman who embraces other Black women in a world that's often not doing that. So it's a great conversation, let's jump in.

Conversation with Cari Champion

LUVVIE Hi Cari. Thank you for joining me on the podcast.

CARI Luvvie, I've been trying to get on your podcast forever. When did I get important enough? Because I've been casually creeping around, just liking all your posts. And so you know that I too would like to be a part of the fight.

LUVVIE You always been important. I was like you every day. You'd be, "So I have a new show and today I'm running a network." [inaudible 00:08:18].

CARI Girl. Yeah. Amen.

LUVVIE It's like work. So everybody sees you being this fabulous person. What did you want to be when you were growing up?

CARI Oh well, at first I wanted to be Oprah because that was my first visualization of a Black woman on TV talking. Then I was, "No, I'm going to be an attorney." But they're all the same. Right? Because I love to talk, no shocker. And I always wanted to tell stories. I was always a kid that entertained and told stories. And I always felt like, and I think you can relate to this, I say this to everyone, when you're young you always feel some type of way. You feel you know you're destined for something, whatever that may be trouble, good stuff, bad stuff. But I always felt I was destined to tell stories. And I couldn't put the words together as a kid but I felt I was destined to tell stories and speak for people who couldn't speak for themselves. And as I got older, I was able to put that all together. Especially in junior high school and high school, when I was figuring out that a voice matters and that you can ask questions and you can be curious and you can challenge the system. My first real thought though, was Oprah. Do you remember when you were a kid, your mom would make you get up and turn on TV, we didn't have a remote?

LUVVIE Yeah.

CARI I don't know how old I am. And I'd just sit by the TV and just turn till she felt she just found the show. This is child labor. So one day I was flipping the channel and I just stopped because I saw this Black woman who looked like us. And she was just so captivating, and I had never seen that before in that way. And that's when I was, "Oh, I want to do that."

LUVVIE Yeah, "I want to be Oprah." So in high school, how were you? What was high school Cari like?

CARI Well girl, I was a nerd. I was a bully. I was a pain in the ass. I was all of those things. You have to realize I grew up in... Okay, so we grew up in LA, just me and my mom, West LA, not far from where I live now. And my mother got one of these jobs where she was working in sales. And so she worked her way up. And so she finally did so well that she felt she had enough money to move to Pasadena. But for the first 12 years of my life, I lived in West LA with my cousins, we were in the hood doing all kinds of crazy things, bad neighborhood kids' stuff, throwing cats on top of rooms. Just being bad, just being around all the bad stuff. And that was one of the reasons why my mother wanted me to not be around them because she knew what was going to happen. I really thought, Luvvie, at 18 years old, all Black girls had kids. That's how hood it was in my mind, that was my mentality.

And my mom got this really good job. And we moved to Pasadena. It was like the Caria, who was moving on up, she just packed up the stuff. We moved to what we thought was a great

neighborhood from where we lived before. And it was a whole new world, but Pasadena was just 20 minutes up the road, but it felt very different. And that changed my trajectory. I was around different people. I felt a little more unique because it was a diverse school, but there were not as many Black folks and I just felt just different. And I felt I could speak up more and kind of become myself. So in high school I was class president. But then at the same time, I'd be bullying people because I know I was popular. "Give me your snacks." Just a combination of things, just trying to figure out my life.

But my heart was right. But I was a problem child. I tried to fight and then run after school and not fight. Then I have a little boyfriend who picked me up in his car because I had to have a boyfriend with a car, but I was supposed to be this really good book-smart girl. It's the Gemini in me, I had dual personalities. And then by the time I graduated, I was set on the trajectory of just making sure that I would be the first in my family to go to school and be successful. After I had some growing pains at high school [crosstalk 00:12:19]-

LUVVIE In high school, so you were out here running these streets and basically being the high school kid in the movies? [inaudible 00:00:12:24].

CARI Yes, yes. But then talk to the teacher and be, "So how can I help? Oh, no, extra credit? Yeah." I was a full politician. I was a full politician. I'd be in front of the teachers saying all the things I'm sort of saying. And after school cussing, trying to fight, trying to be cool. Just all kinds of things. You know what I mean? But whatever. I mean, who knows, right? You have to realize Luvvie, you know that too, when you grow up one way and you see one thing you have to unlearn that behavior. It took me a while to unlearn the behavior. I was the product of my circumstances. I lived one foot in the ghetto and then one foot of trying to get out of the ghetto. I was a product of both. My homegirl says I'm a... What she called me? She goes, I am a bougie, ghetto lady or something like that.

LUVVIE [Bougie 00:23:03].

CARI She just always described... Bougie, right? The mixture of everything I am. And I'm, "Yeah, that's true." I live in both worlds. And I'm happy about it. Right.

LUVVIE Multi faceted, multi hyphenates. Where did you go to college?

CARI I went to UCLA and I got a... This is a good story. I got accepted to a couple of schools. So I wanted to go to Spelman because when you... I don't know if you know this, living in LA, you're not really connected with the culture. So I was, "I'm going to go to HBCU." So I applied to Hampton, Spelman, Howard. Let me think. I think those were the three. Those are my HBCUs. And then I applied to Michigan State because I'm a big Laker fan and after Magic Johnson, so it was very important that I go to that school because my favorite Laker went there. But I didn't get into Spelman, girl. I was, "I know they didn't disrespect me like that." But I got into Howard and Hampton. And then my mother was, just this true Black momma, "You aren't going there. You're going up the street. Okay?" She was, "You go to UC Berkeley, or you can go to UCLA. Those are your two." Because those are I applied to. No, she shut that down. She was, "It's not going to happen. You're not going to Michigan State either, it's too cold." She just didn't want me to leave, which I get. So I went to UCLA but the best experience I've ever had, I could not-

LUVVIE What was your major that you went in?

CARI Oh, that's a good one. I didn't have a major until the third quarter of my freshman year and I decided to major in English. And I graduated with a degree in English with the emphasis in mass communications. English, because I had listened to this local news anchor tell me that if I, not me per se, but everybody, he said, "If you major in English, you could be a doctor, you could go..." Because he's saying you can go to med school with an English degree, you could be an attorney, you can do all the things you want to with one of these degrees that allows you to live in whatever space. And I thought that was smart. But it also taught me how to write. Look who I'm talking to. But it taught me how to write, to think quickly, to be analytical, all the things that I didn't necessarily know that I was going to be using in my profession. It really was life changing. That was the hardest, English degree, they had those weeder courses and it was really hard. I wasn't book-book smart, but it taught me a lot of disciplines. It changed the game for me. I was, "Let me get my act together. Hanging out here with all these white people."

LUVVIE See, I love the fact that you did English and then you actually stuck with it because a lot of people what they start with in college is now what they end. Maybe I should have taken English as my major. Because I ended up getting my degree in psychology. But I'm, "Damn, maybe I should have done English."

CARI No, but psychology is hard. It was [polypsy 00:16:02] , psychology, a lot of people were pre-med, did you ever remember that? [crosstalk 00:16:05].

LUVVIE I was psychology pre-med. Yeah. And then I dropped the pre-med because I got a D in chemistry and I was, "No [crosstalk 00:16:11]."

CARI [inaudible 00:16:13]. Look, I knew I didn't know nothing about no chemistry. I wasn't going to pretend. I didn't want to mess up and lower my GPA. You all go ahead-

LUVVIE Listen, because chemistry definitely lowered my GPA at the end of freshman year. My fricking GPA was a 2.7 because of chemistry.

CARI Yeah, yes. Yeah. I was, "I'm all set." I'm barely keeping a 2.8 On my own, I don't need you all to take me down.

LUVVIE Exactly. I don't need these problems in my life. Me then should have known that. So did you stay at home or did you stay on campus?

CARI Oh girl, I stayed on campus. I moved out, I never went back home. I never went back home. I moved out at 18 and I was, "It's a wrap." I stayed on campus my freshman year, which was the best thing ever. I got an apartment. My sophomore year, I was poor as I'll get out. I had 15,000 jobs trying to pay for... because I wasn't using my to loan money for books. I was buying bedroom sets and outfits.

LUVVIE Wait, you and everybody else. The refund check [crosstalk 00:17:12]. Everybody's homecoming outfits was fire, okay.

CARI Did I use any of that Pell grant money on anything that has to do with a book? I don't think so. I don't want to tell the story because it's not how people should be. But I can think about many classes I took without a book. I'd be sharing [crosstalk 00:17:35].

LUVVIE Tell us. No, because on this show everybody gives us the real truth.

CARI I probably went a couple of quarters without buying a book because I was up here buying stuff I wasn't supposed to buy. You know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE You probably borrowed the books from other people because some of us did that too.

CARI O yes. I borrowed a book from somebody else or I picked a study partner. Usually somebody who's real smart and I would study with them and I live my best Black life. Because I'm going to be cute. I'm going to get my her done. It's funny because I know all the games, right? I have a foundation called Brown Girls Dream and sometimes when I'm dealing with these young girls, they're always saying, "I need this, I need that." I said, "But why is your hair so cute? How are we going to help you with everything else and you fly, your nails are better than mine?" And they always laugh. They'd be, "That's not the point, the point is..."

LUVVIE "I know the tricks because I was there."

CARI I know because I did it.

LUVVIE Honestly, I'm glad for that honesty because let's all not act like we weren't trifling in college. Let us not act like we weren't trifling.

CARI You want to hear something crazy though, Luvvie? No matter how trifling I was, I was still very shy, which I think is indicative of how I am right now. Okay, I like a lot of attention and I'm bold and I'm out there. I'm not shy anymore. But I was really shy. I was afraid of boys. I'd be a bloom, walk with little skirts on and high heels, but don't try to talk to me because I'm going to run out of the way. I was the most trifling when it comes to just, "I got to be the cutest or whatever." But I could never transfer that, I didn't have a boyfriend at all. It wasn't like boys didn't like me, but I was just afraid of it.

I was that girl that didn't want to eat in front of a boy. I don't know when that started to [inaudible 00:19:16]. I was, "I'm going to eat later." Or I try to hang out with boys and I'd be nervous and scared. I'm, "Oh my God. He touched me." You know what I mean? That kind of thing. And I used to laugh because, like I told you earlier, I had two different personalities and I think we all have that. But I was aware of what I was doing, which personality... And I'm not trying to say I'm crazy, but I do believe that we show up different ways for different people. And I was doing that since I was a little kid. And it's interesting when I talk about it, I didn't know that then, but I was showing up with the way that I thought I was supposed to show up. You know what I mean?

LUVVIE So in college you stuck with this major, did you end up getting any internships in media?

CARI Girl, I had a thousand internships and they were all the best. I had the best internships. So I had an internship at MTV when I thought I wanted to do entertainment reporting because you always feel that way. And it was with... What was this girl who's really popular? Jenny? I don't know her name. She's an actress now. She had a show-

LUVVIE McCarthy?

CARI Yes. And we were interning on her show and we never got to see her or talk to her because it was like she was so perfect. But we were interning on that show for a little while. And it was weird because I was the only Black woman. I was always the only Black. Right. But it was a weird experience. We liked it and it was fun, but it was just a weird experience to see. At that time I was, "No, that doesn't require me to think too much." I was, "I don't want to totally do that." I'll wait, I'll put a pin in entertainment reporting. And then I went to DC and I had two internships, but one of the two we lived in DC for a semester. And one of the two internships was at Voice of America.

And I don't know if you're familiar with Voice of America, but it is a radio station that broadcasts everywhere in other parts of the world, in different parts of the country, not necessarily in the United States of America, but it's based in DC because it's a political hub and I got to do so many wonderful things. It wasn't an internship that was traditional, but they let me do interviews, they let me set up interviews, they let me... One time, Hillary Clinton came through and they let me interview her. It was great. I had wrote down my questions and I was, "Okay, Mrs Hillary..." Just excited, nervous but excited. And she knew, and she was so nice to me. I remember interviewing Sammy Davis Junior's daughter after he died, she wrote this great book. And I [inaudible 00:21:51] Luvvie and I remember going to my momma afterwards, called my momma I'm, "Oh, we're going to be rich, I'm so good at what I do." [inaudible 00:00:22:01].

I felt it. Because it felt so natural. Interviewing people, connecting with them, talking to them, it was just what I was born to do. I had never looked back. I always thought of different things, but it's always been what God has put on my heart. I've never looked away. I'm only doing what I have been called to do. And I think that when I was in college, there was these moments that just solidified what I already felt the spirit had put on me. I already knew God was, "This is what you're going to do." I didn't know, Luvvie, to be honest with you, my platform would be to make sure I'm building Black women up and making sure that we represent us in a way that we should be loved, respected, and protected. But that came later. But there was this calling of, "I'm going to put you in these spaces and you might be the only one, but make sure that you're holding the door open for others. And that's why I knew.

Good for others. And that's why I knew along the way, whatever success I have had was only because it was a direct result of what God wanted me to do.

LUVVIE Yes, yes. We're not always clear what the purpose is or the path, but then we'll find ourselves there and be like, Ah, that makes sense. When you graduated from college, what was your first job?

CARI Oh gosh. You know how when you graduate, you think you're supposed to have the real job? Like, Oh, I'm about to get you about to kill it. I'm about to... In my mind, I'm going to tell you

how silly I was. I was like, by the time I'm 25, I'll probably be a millionaire, by the time I'm yada yada, yada. I had all these earmarks, like people do when they graduate. Because I wasn't making any of those things that I put in my head, even though I wasn't checking the list off, I was feeling very, very much like a failure. When I graduated, I didn't have the typical on-air job because those jobs just aren't, you just don't find them so easily when you're graduating. All the internships that I did didn't necessarily put me in front of the camera.

Nobody's going to let me just come on TV and talk. I did it the Brown way, which is what I like to call... We never have a direct path, we never have a hookup. Nobody comes around and says, let me go ahead and put you in front of the TV cause you look like you deserve it. I ended up working at a local news station as an assignment editor. I worked at the assignment desk and during the day while I finished my GEs, because I didn't take all my General Eds, while I was at UCLA. I would go there at night.

During the day I worked this job and at night I finished up my classes so I can get my degree, because I was on the five-year plus plan. I was putting together what we call a resume reel, I would ask local reporters, whoever I worked with. Hey, do you mind if I meet you at a story? I just want to get in front of the camera and do a stand up. I want to choose a story with my phone or whatever the case, not with my phone. I just want to shoot the story if that's okay with you. Some reporters would say yes, some reporters were like "nah little girl, get out of the way, I ain't got time for you, I got work to do."

It's like somebody saying Luvvie, can I follow you around? I want to be a writer, can I write you a few chapters? You like, what? No, I'm working. That's essentially what I was asking them to do, and a few people said yes. Then maybe after a year, again, a year after I graduated, I put together this resume reel that might've been like three or four minutes. I sent it out to maybe 30 places, hoping somebody would give me a job. I remember being so poor, and so disappointed with myself because I wasn't the most likely to succeed with the succeeding in the way in which I thought I should be.

I remember sending out these resume reels and at the time you had to actually send them out and you couldn't just email them. I only had, I don't know how much money I had left, it was just my very last reel. I was like, damn I got, I mean hard times, maybe I got \$40 left in my account. This is my last reel, better be good. Cause it took me so much money to put it out there. Everyone was like no, I can't. I would fly myself to certain places trying to get in front of the news director thinking if they see me, they'd give me a job, my first TV job. I was getting a lot of no's. Then my very last reel, I was like, okay, if this doesn't work, I'm going to take a break and figure out a way to put this tape together again. It may take six months but I'll figure it out.

It was in West Virginia and the news director called me, and he was like... Essentially I knew they needed a Black person. He was like, "yeah sure, come on in, you can take the job." I was like, I got the job? He was like, "yes, this is what we pay." It was like nothing. He's like, "you're going to have to drive yourself out here, and we'll pay you this every two weeks." Like every two weeks, girl, I don't even know, every week it was like maybe \$450 every week. It was like zero, below poverty and it was in West Virginia. I drove my Nissan Altima, I remember like it was yesterday, across country, from West LA to West Virginia, for my very first real TV job. I was a one man band, I carried the camera, I carried the tripod.

LUVVIE What?

CARI Girl Yeah, I edited out my video. I literally would do it all, I was running around trying to be Katie Couric, sweating up a storm in the middle of West Virginia, the middle of nowhere. Shooting tripods, flies everywhere. It was a very humble beginning and I wouldn't have changed it for a world because it really changed everything. Like it taught me to tell better stories, I didn't mind living in the middle of nowhere, I didn't mind driving two hours to cover a story. Then when I get there, I pull out my little camera and my tripod. I got tired of it though, I got to be honest with you, after like a year, I was like, all right, I'm all set. I've been here a year, it's time ago, a little less than a year, I was like I'm all set, I need a new job now.

LUVVIE Where'd you go next?

CARI I jumped around, I worked at a small cable startup, it was never easy, it was small cable startup where they didn't want to make me a full-time reporter. I was half reporter, half assignment editor, and that was in Orange County. Then it was like I couldn't get a job, so I worked as an AP at E! News, For awhile waiting to get on camera, nobody wanted me on camera. Girl, it was crazy.

Then finally I got a job in West Virginia, I mean, excuse me, West Palm, Florida. That was my real true, true, go live, talk, talk news, and I made \$32,000 a year. I was probably, I don't know cause that came late in life, well career wise, I probably was like 29. I was making \$32,000 a year in West Palm Beach, Florida and I was just happy because I didn't have to shoot my own stuff. I got my photographer, I stayed there for four years and just learned the ropes, and I was awful. I cannot explain to you how grateful I am that they kept me on air, because when I tell you I was the worst. I would make all these mistakes, I'd be nervous, camera would come on and I stopped talking. I'd be like, back to you, back to you, back to you. Girl, I was a disaster, I was a true disaster.

LUVVIE But they loved you enough to keep you.

CARI Also they were paying me pennies, so they were like, we might as well keep her working as hard as she could. Look, you know how we are, we going to figure it out. I mean, I would, I would go home at night and cry because I was so humiliated. And you know how you know, you're not good? Your colleagues be like, "Hey", like everybody was trying to help me, they'd be like, "Hey." I was so embarrassed by how awful I was. And they were just, people would put so much pity on me, they just felt sorry for me. Then I just put my head down and I was like, I'm going to figure this out, I'm not going to be nervous when the camera come on. I worked my way up to, by the time I got ready to leave the station, I was the weekend anchor and I got very, very comfortable.

When I tell you, what I tell all my, especially my mentees, I'm like you got to start in a small market because you don't want that to follow you. The mistakes that I made, pronouncing names wrong, getting nervous on TV, walking out of a live shot. All the things that you should, you should have taken care of in a small market, you don't want to do that on CNN. I remember everyone was like, "I want to start a CNN," I'm like, no you don't, because you going to make all kinds of mistakes and say somebody name wrong, and lose all your credibility. So you want to

start off someplace where no one can see you fall down as many times as you need to fall down, so that you can get back up, and that's exactly what happened.

LUVVIE People always want to go past that work. People want the shortcut and go straight to ESPN And now you know, all this stuff. I'm just like, you want to fall flat on your face when nobody's watching, first.

CARI Listen, I cannot tell you, while I hated it and like I said, later in life had helped me, but it made me so much better. So when I did get this opportunity to go to ESPN, I had made so many mistakes, even when I got the ESPN, I made mistakes. You have to be able to, and you know this, all the greats have amnesia. Anybody I've noticed who is great at what they do, they don't let a bad moment, a bad incident, a bad whatever it may be, career choice hold them down. They forget, not forget but they forget, and they pick themselves back up and they follow through. That's to me, what you have to do, you got to forget, cause that'll hold you that'll paralyze you. It really rocked my self-esteem but I was like, all right I got to just figure this out. Look, I can think of so many. In your career, what would you think, have you ever said, that was a huge mistake?

LUVVIE Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, and I feel like here's the thing is though, the mistakes you make when you are starting, nobody sees that, the mistakes you make when you are moving up, everybody sees that. You're like look, make as many mistakes as you can when you're first starting, so you're not making them again.

CARI Why is that? Why does everybody see them when you have, quote-unquote, made it?

LUVVIE I think it's because when you are still climbing the ladder, before you become a success, you're still the underdog that people are rooting for. When you get to a certain point, you stop being David, you become Goliath.

CARI Yes, that's word.

LUVVIE Right? You stopped being David, and when you stopped being David, people are no longer rooting for you to win because they're like, "you've already won your Goliath, you're fine." So now there are other Davids that they're rooting for, as your Goliath.

CARI Wow, that's word. Yes, and then they like, "Um hum, you think you, whatever." Yes, oh my God, yes, oh my God, yes. Word.

LUVVIE And you were always like, the only Black woman in these spaces.

CARI Always, and it was uncomfortable. It was uncomfortable because you know now I've gotten to the point, thank you Jesus, where I can just be like, I'm tired of making everybody comfortable. Everybody has to be uncomfortable around me, I'm no longer doing that in any of my workspaces. I did that for years at ESPN, I did that for years at all the other previous jobs. When I got to this point in my life where I was just like, I'm literally physically and mentally exhausted so I can't make you comfortable anymore. I don't even have it, I don't even know how to dig deep from it anymore, and especially considering our times. I was just like, I don't have it for

you, I'm sorry, and if you're uncomfortable, you don't have to be uncomfortable and that's on you.

I think that when I was the first, like being the first, I was talking to somebody about this the other day, being the first is always great. Luvvie, you've been the first in so many instances, our friends have been the first in so many instances but we don't talk about what it takes because we will break the room, these glass ceilings if you will. There's all these cuts and bruises that come from being the first, like it hurts. It's a lot of pain associated with being the first and I think we don't discuss that enough, I think for me, talking about the first, so all these jobs where I was the first or I found myself trying to make everybody happy and comfortable no matter what. Even when I got to ESPN, I had jumped through all these different markets, so I went to West Palm, which was like my first job.

Then I came back and I went to Atlanta, and Atlanta changed me because I had never worked around so many Black, powerful people. That city is full of us, powerful people, moving and shaking in there, that was empowering for me and I needed that, just from my spirit, just to see it. Then when I was in Atlanta, I didn't realize how racist Atlanta was. Again, people who grew up on the West Coast, who feel like the world is so diverse, it is a melting pot out here. You don't realize that you dig in these deep, deep pockets and the racism is more obvious in certain places and not as obvious, in like perhaps the West Coast, certain areas in the West Coast.

When I was in Atlanta they could not stand me, because my arrogance and my, I deserve... My mediocre white men mentality, because you know, I always say, it's always a mediocre white man that's in charge of some shit. And they are so mediocre but they feel like they deserve everything. And I felt that same way, I didn't know I was behaving like a mediocre white man, meaning I walked in like, I deserve this, give this to me. What you doing? What you're doing? What can I have it? We don't normally know that we're doing that, and that turned them off so much in Atlanta, it was such a learning lesson, and I really, really upset a lot of white folks.

LUVVIE Even though it's a very Black city, was it mostly Black people or was it, did you have white anchors?

CARI My station was the whitest, of all the stations in Atlanta and they were, and they were arguably the most, and I'm not going to say racist, but there was that subdued hint of racism, that subconscious bias, whatever you want to call it.

LUVVIE Passive aggression.

CARI Yeah, that little, what's the word? They just felt like, Who are you? How dare you? That's what we experience a lot as Black women, like how dare you? And I was like, well, I'm me. I didn't even know that I was supposed to be less than, I hadn't had that lesson in life. Not that I am, but I hadn't had that lesson that says you supposed to behave around these people. I was like, you all got me messed up, I don't know where I don't even know what the city is. Why are you guys behaving that way?

While all these Black people are very successful, they do have a respect towards white people that almost lives on the line of, I better be in my place while I'm dealing with this white person.

It was very weird to watch that interaction between the successful Black people, interacting with white people who they thought were successful. There was very much a mentality of, I can't describe, but it was felt weird, because I was like, what are you, why are you behaving that way? When I know that you're this person, I'm making up stuff. You're the chief of police, you can handle the mayor better than that. You do this, you do you do that. I realized this is growing up in the south. I used to work with photographers who would be like, I'm not going to certain places because they still hang people out there.

Fast forward to Ahmaud Arbery, right? That's not that far outside of Atlanta. It makes sense to me why they were behaving that way, because they grew up in the south and they knew that people do that, still do that, there. I was like, what? Unheard of for me, this LA kid growing up, I had never heard of such a thing, but I left Atlanta with that lesson. Then I worked at Tennis Channel, which was great because I got to travel the world, which was beautiful and it opened my eyes in another way. Then from there I went to ESPN, and when I tell you I was not prepared, but again, I have that mentality where I deserve to be everywhere, you can't tell me I can't be nowhere. I'm coming. I'm here. You don't think I'm ready? I'm Ready. That was Luvvie, the hardest time of my professional career up until the moment I left in January of this year.

LUVVIE Why? Tell me more.

CARI Because there is such a mental incarceration that happens to the people who work there, Black, white, purple, and green, that you don't think there is anything else outside of that place because it's so big and it's such an entity and it's so powerful. You don't think anything else exists. If you really want to do sports, you're like, can I go anywhere else to do it? This is a worldwide leader and they train you, if not brainwash you, because it is a cult, in my opinion. That you won't be successful. They list all the people who have left ESPN and where are they now? That type of mentality. So you go in, just happy for whatever little crumbs you give me, if you give me this crumb, you giving me this crumb. Now because it's a corporation, it's cyclical. People come in favor and fall out of favor every so often. So whoever's in favor this week, won't be in favor two years from now.

I had my moment of favor, where whoever was in charge of ESPN, had my back and wanted to make sure I was being promoted. Then I fall out of favor when a new regime comes in, and I learned a lot. I learned that it is a lonely place to be, if you're a woman, it is the worst place to be if you're a Black woman, because there will be nobody who protects you. I also learned that I wasn't allowed to go against men in public, and if I did it in private that the repercussions would be even worse. So I came onto a show called, First Take, with Skip Bayless and Stephen A. Smith, and they were the biggest personalities ever. I was supposed to sit in the middle and be quiet, very much like being coach, where you're in the middle seat, you can't get comfortable.

You can't look to your left, you can't look to your right. You can't lift the window up for some sunshine. You want to go use the bathroom, you can go really relieve yourself. I'm using all of that as a metaphor. Their little sunshine, when I sat in the middle seat, I didn't have a place where I could really have an outlet when I sat in the middle seat. If I tried to say anything about it, its like, how dare you? You better be happy you just sitting here, little Black girl, how dare you? Girl, I was going to quit every other day.

LUVVIE How long were you at ESPN?

CARI

I was there for almost a decade, I was there eight years. Like I literally a long time. And I was on that show for almost three years. The end result of me, by the time I left that show, people were like "Cari's such a monster." But they had no idea what I was dealing with, because I had just lost it. Behind the scenes I was fed up, I was like, I'm not about to be nice to you all no more, I'm done. You all trying to take me out, you all doing this you all going behind my back. I'm over you all, and people didn't know the struggle. Very few people know the struggle, because no one wanted to hear about it. No one wants to hear what we were going through. And as a Black woman that's a horrible feeling because I'm vocal, I want to share. But no one cares. When I tell you, nobody gave a damn including the people that sat next to me, nobody gave a damn, and you better be quiet.

People watch what I call this social abuse take place, and look the other way. And it was so debilitating to my spirit, but then I got some reprieve, right? That's why they say you just got to put your head down and keep going. And I went to Sports Center, but at the time management there really had my back, and it was like a revival. I was living my best life. Although, I was still getting pushback because I was the girl who say look, I flew in with Floyd Mayweather, we about to ask him why he's hitting these woman. You all riding his jock literally, but no one's asking him why he was beating Black women.

I remember when I did this interview with Floyd, I went at him, but in a very professional way, but I wanted him to know, I see you. And I don't care how much money you make or how successful you are, you can't hit Black woman without somebody holding you accountable. And when I did that interview, all these Black men, girl, when I say they flooded my DMS and my Twitter mentions. And was like, you always been an agent for the white man, you such a sellout stuff like, that's why you got kicked off of First Page. Don't nobody like you can't, we can't stand you.

I was like, but that Black woman that he beats could be your mother could be your sister, could be your daughter, and no one has a problem with this? Nobody thinks this is okay? Like, am I wrong? I was in The Twilight Zone Luvvie, you could go to social media and look it up right now, and Google, YouTube, and look at the comments. They would she's such a Sell out. She only like white men, she this, she that, she stuck up. You know, you just be like, God, what about us? What about us?

LUVVIE

First of all, let it be clear that it's already hard enough for Black women to operate in the world. Then you are in a wildly misogynistic industry of sports journalism, like sports period, and then sports journalism. You are the only, often in the room, and then you're the only who happens to be like, I know I'm still am a Black woman, because you know, there's some only's who be like, I'm going to act like I'm not Black. You stood in your Blackness. Of course I love the vitriol because why, why would you not get all the abuse when you're on the right side of history? Why would you actually have support from people with sense when you're actually trying to hold somebody accountable for being a monster, like an actual monster. Floyd Mayweather's hands are actually considered weapons. Like he's a professional boxer, that's a weapon. So if he hits somebody, that's not even just, I just beat on someone, that is assault with a deadly weapon.

CARI

He went to jail. He was in jail. No one talks about it. I think it's, I think it's absolutely shocking that nobody talks about this man's time spent in jail for hitting the mother of his children. The son got up and testify. That is crazy to me

LUVVIE You got backlash for asking this man, for daring to ask him

CARI Girl, it hurts, and the reason why I bring it up, because I want them to know it hurts. It hurts, but there's healing in that pain because I refuse to stand by and stand back, stand back and standby. I ain't doing that. So I'm always, listen, you all I'm not going to be out here abusing us woman. You can say what you want about me, I'll take whatever abuse I have to take, but the time will come that you will have to acknowledge us.

Here's the F'd up thing though. Luvvie, you know, this in our world where we all there's, there's this rarefied air that when us Black folks get up here and there's only so few of us, there's two things that are happening. Especially for women. One, your Black men are feeling uncomfortable on some, some type of way, whatever way that is. Right? And, and that has to do with their own issues that they have to heal. They feel this, this, this battle when we get to a level that they are in, or maybe we might be above them, they battle with you, and it's a weird dynamic. Then there is the woman dynamic, when women get in this rarefied position, they don't like to share with other women. Then they start battling us.

They don't like to share with other women. And they start battling us. And then, you're dancing against all these different devils, if you will, and you're trying to figure it out, but still want to sit in your Blackness and say, "Look, I love you Black men, and I'm not going to stand here and watch you be killed and hunted without me saying something in the summer of social justice." And Black woman, I got your back and it isn't right when they jump down your throat, Meg the Stallion and they say that, "How dare you say something about Tony Lance because he shot you in your foot and you lied?"

We're going to stand with each other, but I really hate that we have to within our own community. Because we've already got the white world to deal with, but within our own community, we're battling each other and we're tearing each other down because we don't want to support one another. It's hard by the time we get to whatever level we get to. You have to understand if I'm in this rare air, I just didn't appear. The struggles that I have that to get to this point in my life, to feel vocal, to talk about it, you have to have my back just on that reason. Just on GP because [crosstalk 00:47:06] you know

LUVVIE ... First and the pain of being the first and all the things-

CARI It hurts.

LUVVIE ... The glass ceiling, all the shattering shards, people can't see the paper cuts on your body.

CARI Little cuts every day, all day long, and we push, and we push, and we push. Now we're conscious of this country, Black women are, we really, truly, we set the moral standard. And I'm really on my, I want you all to start loving us and protecting us, and having each other's back, but I'm saying that to me too. Because I know, I'm not always perfect, I know if I feel like somebody is coming to ... Well I'm not a mean girl, but I'm petty, as my girl Jada said the other day. Like if I think somebody's coming after me, I'm coming right back. Okay. So, that's what you doing? But I shouldn't always do that. I should know that comes from their own pain too.

But we have been taught to match energy for energy. That's all I know how to do. And I don't want to do that anymore. I want us to love one another, I want us, Black men, especially. I want Black men to check other Black men when they see this happening-

LUVVIE Please, please do.

CARI ... Because can check them all day, but I need another Black man to say, "Excuse me, you think that perhaps that's not what you should have did? Do you see why people were pushing back?" Or, I can go down a list. I rarely see Black men call out other Black men that are of note because we don't do it because we feel like we can't. Because we don't want to seem like we're fighting in house. But I'm like sometimes we do need to.

LUVVIE But here's the thing though, they'd come at Black women in a hot second. Without a problem. Without a problem. Those same Black men who are like, "We can't be in fighting publicly," we'll come at Black women all types of crazy and you'd be ... You see it everyday on Twitter. Twitter-

CARI Every day.

LUVVIE ... Actually drives me nuts sometimes because I'm just like, you all really becoming wild at Black women. And you don't ever have a quarter, or a 10th of the energy, [crosstalk 00:49:01].

CARI Yes.

LUVVIE ... all types of out of control shit, you don't.

CARI Yes. Yes. And what is that? Because I'm trying to figure it out. I'm on like, all this energy you got to come at me, you should be using that towards old boy. The moment that I asked Floyd Mayweather about whether or not he hit a woman, and I got all these Black men coming at me talking about, I'm an agent of this, and I'm an agent of that, I can go down a list of interviews that my colleagues have done, where they've called Black men out on things that I think that are far less egregious, I mean more egregious, and they let it ride. It's like, okay, no, he didn't say that. It's okay, it's fine. But I'm all like, wait a second-

LUVVIE See what happened with Gayle? See what happened with Gayle King?

CARI I was mad at Snoop and he tried to walk it back and he did apologize, but I was mad. I was just like that's out of line. That is so out of line. Look, no matter what you think she did, whether she handled it the right way or the wrong way, this is a grandmother, a grandmother aged woman and you coming at her talking about pull up. Like what? Come on.

LUVVIE Calling her out of her name. And I remember making a video being like, the vitriol that you all do at for a Black women is nuts.

CARI I remember.

LUVVIE He came at me for the video. And I said, not the man who just called this woman outside of her name, called her all types of devils and whatever, you all coming at me for defending the woman by just saying, you might have actually done too much, wild. Constantly wild.

CARI And people were like, because they know I'm a big, huge Kobe fan, they were like, "Can you believe Gayle?" I was like, "Listen, listen. First of all I can't believe what Snoop did, I don't want to hear about what Gayle did because it went to death press and you ain't had her back."

LUVVIE She had to start moving with security.

CARI What kind of nonsense is that?

LUVVIE Nonsense. What Black man has to move with security because he's getting death threats for some wild shit he's saying? Kanye even got death threats and he said all types of out-of-pocket, mouth wide open stuff. But let us say something just tiny, you just see people trying to destroy our lives, and that's wild. Which is also why Black women we got to like stand for each other, because the rest of the world is using us as freaking whips.

CARI Yes, yes. And we don't stand for each other and we have to. Like I'm being honest with you, we have to. No matter how much pain we have and whatever we feel like we have to, what we've been taught, we got to unlearn some of the habits that we've been taught, like we really do. And I say that, [inaudible 00:51:28] I'm holding myself accountable. When I feel myself becoming that woman that doesn't take care of another woman I'm like that isn't right, let me fall back because that's not what this is. I got to fall back. And it's instinct. It's survival instinct because, I don't know how you feel about this year, there's been so much that has happened, career, professionally, personally. But when I left ESPN, I have to be honest with you, I left at the end of January, but COVID shut down everything in March.

If COVID would have happened before I left, I wouldn't have left. Because I would have felt like a prisoner, and I would have felt like, oh wait, I might not get another job, or life might not be as good. Or, shoot I'm scared. I would have been a part of this mental incarceration that we as Black people have in society thinking that we are not enough. And I have been liberated. I don't know about you, but I look and question everything now, and you may have arrived here before I did. But when I tell you I looked around, I'm like [inaudible 00:52:22]. And I Star Spangled Banner, and in history books, I'm like, we weren't part of a cult.

I was like, I'm waking up because my existence has been disturbed so so will yours. Like I am sorry, this existence that we have been living in where we thought that this was the American way, I was like, oh okay. I had been in this cold believing that, under his eye, if you watch, any table. So I was like, I'm no longer doing this. My eyes are open, I'm awake, I'm alert, and I'm not going back. Like I said earlier, you've got to be uncomfortable if you're dealing with me in any way, and that's on you.

LUVVIE And I think people got to get used to it, right? More of us got to be like, you know what we got, this is the package you're going to get it in. Look, accept it or not. I will not be bending myself backwards anymore to try to make everybody else feel good meanwhile, I'm aware my back is breaking. We're not doing that because what has that gotten us?

CARI Nothing. Nothing. Look and you were a part of my summer of wake up with Share the Mic. I mean that was a beautiful, beautiful concept. But when I tell you there was so much healing and liberation for me in that, and when I was talking about these white women that I don't feel ... A white woman was one particular reason why I left ESPN. I had this most recent boss my last two years, and she drove me miserable, and she was harassing me and microaggressions. And I was like, why would ... I'd say she just can't stand me. like period. My existence bothered her. The fact that I make more money than her, the fact that I looked better than her, list goes on, because everything about me bothers her. And whatever way that she can control me she's trying.

And I'm like, I'm not a kid, I'm out. So when we had this Share the Mic that you all created, which is so wonderful and I'm so glad you did it, and so grateful to be a part of it, I was able to have some real honest conversations about white women. And when I tell you, you know how wildly successful it was, when I tell you white women that I have worked with in the past reached out to me to apologize, they thought I was talking about them, I wasn't even talking about them. That's why this shit happens all the time. I literally had a handful of white women say, "I'm so sorry, this video really got to me. I don't know if that was me, I just want to apologize." Some I was like, No I am not talking about you."

LUVVIE Dogs was hollering. The hid dogs was hollering because they know they've done that to somebody, even if it's not you. Wow. Wow. See I love hearing stuff that's come from that. Like literally people being like, yo, this is the first time I've been able to trust a woman. Like people telling me that their partner is the first time that they've been able to actually be in friendship with an actual white woman, has been something that has brought me joy about Share the Mic now. A lot of people have really stood with [inaudible 00:55:07] their partner, they're like legit friends now and that's big.

CARI See let me tell you something. I don't know if you even understand, I know you understand the impact. But for me, I was set in my ways. Busy, my dog. She was my partner and she's still my dog. She's on my TV show, her and I text, we talk. I'm able to have an honest, open conversation with her and I'm like, you're doing some healing for me little girl and you don't even know it. I'm literally, I was anti, anti. I was off white woman for 2020 like my homeboy Antonio Brown said, I was off white women for 2020. I still might be off of them a little bit.

But she came in and shared some stuff with me that made me realize how they're socialized so differently. And how they don't understand the sisterhood concept that we have, and their aggressions, micro or not, are just who they are, because they're competing against all women, not just us. And then there's an extra level of, when they have some kind of power over us, there's an extra level of competition because they're so intimidated by who we are. And it was just some beautiful, honest, open conversation. I mean, I can tell you now name, first and last name and women that I have worked with going, digging back to 2012, who were like, "Were are you talking about me? I'm sorry if you were."

I was just like, yo, it was powerful. So kudos to you and the crew because Luvvie, that is generational change, the power of Share the Mic was huge, huge.

LUVVIE Listen, I'm over here like man.

CARI Huge.

LUVVIE It's crazy.

CARI It was huge.

LUVVIE It's crazy and actually like-

CARI It's huge.

LUVVIE ... People felt convicted by it. It's so crazy like, just from listening to the different conversations that the Black women were having on these white women's platforms, people were like, "I feel convicted. I feel the deep need to fix my shit.

CARI Yes. Because you've been dirty and you've been treating as dirty for so long, and it goes back to when we didn't want your stinking husband in slave days, and he would rape us, and you all knew he wanted us and desired us more than he desired you, but we didn't want his ass no way. But you couldn't go at him and be crazy with that energy, so you brought it to us.

LUVVIE You brought it to us.

CARI So it comes and so it's a new form of it now in 2020, but it's been going on since the existence of time, where they've always resented us for things that we couldn't even control. So now, when you're bringing it to the table, in whatever form it may be in, professionally or personally, you then are saying, "Wow." Like the women who got it, got it, and that's all that matters. I don't care if only one person got it during [Share the Mic](#). When I tell you it was powerful ... And I felt safe. I don't feel safe to share. I felt so safe to tell Busy everything I felt about white women, and how I was off white women, and how you got to realize that I'm speaking my truth and I'm going to tell you why, because you all so sneaky and manipulative and crying all the goddamn time and turning, come at you and be crazy, but then when you meet them with that same energy, you become the problem.

CARI You know what I mean? And like, no you started it. You came to me with all this energy, I'm meeting you with that same energy, and now suddenly you're crying and you the victim.

LUVVIE Yep.

CARI That's not right.

LUVVIE Yep. And [Sophia Bush](#) was my partner and me and Sophia talked all the time that's like, and Sophia would know, I tell her the truth, and she can take it. And I'm just like, [crosstalk 00:58:33]. I feel like we should do a follow up where the partners who are still in conversation, just like jump on a call all together and be like, how has this thing actually changed how you deal with other people? Because it has.

CARI I have so much more compassionate for white women. Not in a way that I think that I'll let the okie-dokey happen, but in a way where I see them behaving how they behave because that's

who they are and I'm willing to say, so just so you know what I'm feeling now is this. Or, I feel this energy. Like one of my good God, God bless her. She's talking to me about how one of my other white friends, and she knows how I feel about white women. And I told her, I was like, you all get on my nerves. I was like, I love you, but you get on my nerves. I was like, your behavior in the following ways bothers me. And this was after we did Share the Mic.

And she received it, she didn't want to hear it, and I said, I know you don't want to hear it, but it's true. I don't want to hear about you're mad at your mom because she's not giving your inheritance. I was like, do you know how ridiculously selfish you sound talking to somebody like me who has built myself from the ground up, scraped two pennies together and made all this happen, and I don't have any goddamn inheritance.

LUVVIE Inheritance?

CARI And I don't-

LUVVIE Inheritance wow.

CARI ... I was just like, you sound crazy. I was like, consider your audience. I was like, you need to realize that you're ... You should be grateful for what you have, you sound like a spoiled brat. And people have to be able to hear that. They don't want to receive that and they don't want to do the work, but that's okay. Then again, back to the comfortable level, [inaudible 01:00:02] or if you are you about to be uncomfortable because I don't care. When I tell you, [Sophia](#) I love her by the way, I made a lot of friends from that too.

LUVVIE [crosstalk 01:00:10] Oh yay.

CARI I love [Glennon](#) like-

LUVVIE That's my hommie right there.

CARI I stand for her. She can do ... I love everything about this woman and everything she represents. [Sophia](#), obviously I follow her Mandy Moore, Kimberly Williams Paisley, when I tell you there are so many women we are all still in contact, and we're all listening, we're doing the work, we're listening, they're listening, it's a beautiful thing. And that was a part of my summer of awakening. That is also a part of what has changed for me career-wise since I left ESPN. I leave, we have this summer where the world has changed, and we're being more open and honest, and I'm doing it. And that also helped me realize that I can't keep lying in this professional environment, my spirit won't take it, my body won't take it, I don't even have it. So I have to go in being my whole self.

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.

LUVVIE And you've done a few things ... Okay. So you of course had [Brown Girls Dream](#), your foundation beforehand.

CARI Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

LUVVIE At the core of your insistence of being here for Black women, talk about Brown Girls Dream.

CARI So that is a foundation that I created based out of a necessity that exists. I know that there is a world in which we're not pushed to the front of the line, or people are not like, hook my girl up, or give her the position. We know it happens, nepotism, hookup happen all the time in other communities, but I don't think we do it in our communities. So I created this informal mentorship where, professionally and personally, I want these girls to be able to talk to me. I want to put them in front of people who are successful. I want them to have an easy, direct line to people who are living the dreams in which they want to live.

And so, I think our common denominality is that we all have dreams. and when we see someone living the dream that we think we want to live, or something similar to it, we would love to have access to that person. And so I go through a very, a very, very tight process of who I let in, but I have over, we probably have 75 girls. It's been around for two and a half years, it's going on three. But, we had hundreds of girls apply and we couldn't, if I'm honest with you, meet everybody's need, and I was big on quantity. I mean excuse me, quality and not quantity.

I didn't want to be like, I have 500 girls and we da, da, da, da. I want to be able to have interaction with the girls, I want their mentors to be able to interact with them. I want them to have real life opportunities based on the fact that I know who they are, and I know their hearts. Look, you know the story, you hired one of my girls, which-

LUVVIE I did.

CARI ... I am so grateful for. She's amazing. She is a boss [crosstalk 01:02:51] in every single word, and she can take it. She asked me about loving it I was like look, [inaudible 01:02:57] don't go in there ... Be your excellent self, no handholding, figure it out, become solution-oriented, like most of us. All of us live in ... In the world that we live in we want to make, when we hire somebody, we want to make as few decisions as possible. We need somebody to make our lives easier. And so, that's what you want, but she's also going to learn so much from you.

Like I had one of my other girls get hired by Serena. She went from living in the South to, in Chick-fil-A every day and treating like, so let's go get on a PJ for work. And she's as humble as she can be but, I have an example, like the woman who was running Serena's camp didn't

necessarily like her and I said, "Can I say something? I disagree." I was like, "You can't relate to her because one, you're not Black, but two, you don't know her the way I know her." And I pushed her and I said, "Serena why don't you meet with her? Tell me what you think."

And she met with a few of my girls and she loved them. By the way she wanted to hire them. She wanted to hire every one but this one girl who the chief of staff didn't want, Serena ended up hiring because she felt the connection. But that's what we do for each other, right? Because we know what we can do. We've been in that person's situation. If you're white, you can't relate to me. You don't know why I'm shy. You don't know why I don't know sushi. You don't know where I come from. You don't know my background. So you can't push for me and fight for me the way another brown girl could. And so that's the point of this program? Like we need somebody to be fighting for us.

Hold the damn door open, let us in, push us to the front. Push us right to the front.

LUVVIE It's necessary because again, like so many of us, especially who are running our companies, we're like, we do actually want to hire the Black girl.

CARI Yes.

LUVVIE And going out to look, it's hard. Because, you can even ask for somebody to find you a Black girl, they won't even come back with a Black girl. You'll be like, come on. Because we also want to lift as we climb. So when I was like, "I need an assistant, I was like Cari." Hey girl, do you know somebody. You were like, "Yes, here you go."

CARI But it is hard for us to find our own, you're absolutely right about that. No, it's hard because I can relate to that in every single step of the way. For me, the reason why I didn't hire any of the girls so closely to the program, because I am a full mama. I'd be in a business, I'd be like, I can't separate the two. I need to learn to separate the two. I'd be like, so what happened? Who did what? You still seeing him? You know I don't like it, all their business. And they're like, do I work for you? Are you my mama? And I was like, okay you're right.

LUVVIE Right, right.

CARI I need to get somebody totally separate. But, listen, so [my program's](#) been going great, we've been getting a lot of great donations. People have loved us. I started the show, which has grown to [inaudible 00:19:39], which is phenomenal. I'm excited [crosstalk 01:05:43] there is everything.

LUVVIE Look girl, we EP show, we Kiki, we literally be Kiki, it's the whole Kiki session.

CARI That's it.

LUVVIE And it's a Kiki session and we're not even given the professional either we could to the people who held us back because we have so much grace. But what we are doing is holding people accountable. Our hope is that this show will be a love letter to Black women and making sure

that we support each other and build each other up. This show is going to be about how great we are and how we deserve the love and attention that we so longed for but rarely get.

LUVVIE Because [you and Jemele had been through the fire](#).

CARI Girl.

LUVVIE You and Jemele, [I had Jemele on last year, and she also told her story](#). And being the woman in that space and being the woman who Donald Trump tried to go against, you all two have been through the fire together so it makes perfect sense for y'all to be on a show together, and Kiki, the fact that you're EPing, Amen, okay?

CARI Yes. Because we want to start owning and controlling the narrative, no one else can do that. You're already doing that, you know how to do it, everybody else needs that lesson. I tried to tell my girls now they'd be like, "I want to be in front of the camera." I'm like, no, no, no, go on behind the scene-

LUVVIE You're producing.

CARI You can do ... Yeah, start controlling the narrative and owning the narrative. Because that's the only way that we're going to get our just too, you know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE I see it. And look, since you left ESPN, you've been securing bags. Which-

CARI Girl.

LUVVIE ... That decision. You're like, I should have been led.

CARI Can I say something? I'm stalking myself. I'm like, why didn't I know this world was waiting? But it's also the climate too, right? Because again, back to what I said earlier, it's ordained, God knew, this is the climate. Because Black women are in high demand professionally. You know that they want you to do something every other day. But, we have our show and now coming back for a second season in two weeks. Then I have two podcasts, your podcasts. I have Thursday night football that I do with Amazon.

I work on TNT, I forgot about that girl. I do NBA on TNT. I literally have secured contract, after contract, after contract, and I just am like, you are funny God, because you've been waiting, but you like, "See, there you go, you going to take your time, that's fine.

LUVVIE God was like, it's cool, when you ready, I'll be here. He always teaches us that lesson. Trust me, I know that exact lesson. God be like, I'm just waiting once you-

CARI Once you get on board.

LUVVIE God will be like, "I told you, but welcome. You're welcome." Okay. Like he was like, you weren't supposed to be struggling like this with these people, you're worth way more but you had to learn that. You had to be ready.

CARI Yes. If you want to stay and struggle, and fight these people internally, when I'm trying to let you know, there's a whole another world. But the move was done with so much faith because when I left, I had a few things in the back, right. We didn't know the world was shutting up, I was doing [my Titans show with The Rock](#), and then I was going to the Olympics. But then the world shut down, so we didn't have the Olympics anymore, and we had just wrapped the show Titans. And I was like, okay, well, let's see what God goes. And God was like, standby, standby. Here we go-

LUVVIE Like hold ON.

CARI This, this, this, and this. And I was like, I'm okay, I see you.

LUVVIE Every day. Every day.

CARI It's such ...

LUVVIE Every day. Every day.

CARI It's such a blessing. I'm beyond grateful and I... By the way, so grateful to be on your platform because I love just to watch us win and do it in such spectacular fashion.

LUVVIE Listen, we have to. We have to. I'm just so excited for this time because I really do think people are finally understanding that you need Black women.

CARI Mm-hmm (affirmative).

LUVVIE Not just need us, but we make it better. That's why they looking for us, right. Not because we're... No, they're like, "I need some Black woman flavor." They might not even know why they need it yet, and then they get it, then they go, "Oh, that's why I needed it."

CARI That's what was missing. Yeah. Yes.

LUVVIE And while they looking for the flavor, we'll give it to them.

CARI Girl, all day, everyday. And respect it, and respect it, and respect it, and that's where we're getting. We're getting... Look, we finally going to be respected, and we're getting our love, and we're getting our just too. And people are like, "Oh, well, what happens when this goes away?" It's not going away. It's my job to make sure it don't go away. It's your job to make sure it don't go away. You're going to hear us, and we're here to stay and we want our respect, and you're going to give me my worth. You're going to acknowledge it and then pay me my worth. That's just all it is to it.

LUVVIE Pay me what you owe me, yo. Securing all the bags without apology.

CARI Thank you.

LUVVIE Without apology. And we going to be expensive, y'all going to have to write big checks.

CARI Yes. Because we're going to give you an experience nobody else will. You're paying for the experience of Luvvie to walk in the door and make your life better. You're paying for the experience for Cari to come on your show and make your life better. To be a part of your organization and make your life better. You're welcome. Pay for it.

LUVVIE You are welcome.

CARI You're welcome.

LUVVIE You are welcome, okay. That's what I'm saying. I'm, look, I'm excited for it, which is why I'm always like, "Yes." Yes. Every new announcement I'd be like, "I'm here for all of it." Let's go. Let's [crosstalk 01:10:52]

CARI I love it, thank you. Same here, same here. Don't forget to do Share the Mic with... Set me up on that, girl. Because you don't know how many lives y'all have changed. [Crosstalk 01:11:03] Let me tell you how the summer went. It went from all the things that were happening, right. It was Ahmaud Arbery, it was George... No, it wasn't George Floyd yet. I think it was Share the Mic for George Floyd-

LUVVIE Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Share the Mic.

CARI Yeah, Breonna Taylor. All of that was that.. All of those events were wrapped around why Share the Mic was so needed and so powerful. And it was to me, it was just a summer of change. It was a summer of social justice. I still get people who, that video saying, "God, that was crazy," Busy said this, they said... Her friends are my friends who follow me now, or whatever the case may be. And they're here for the message, and the message started with the seed that you all planted. And you have to sit back and just revel in all of the good work that has been built from that.

LUVVIE I don't actually think we have. I don't think we-

CARI I know y'all have it. I know y'all have it.

LUVVIE Because we kind of float above it and watch it because, we even won an award for it a couple of weeks ago, and we were all like, "Oh, that's cool." And we just kept the day going.

CARI Y'all need to slow it down, and y'all need to recap and ask people to send you their individual lessons, stories, learn, things you've shared, meetings that I've used it. Girl, I'll be taking pitch meetings and they'd be like, "Oh, that Share the Mic was so great." Big executives of companies talking to me about Share the Mic, and I'm all like, "Wow, this is cool. These girls got a powerful reach." It was beautiful. It was beautiful.

LUVVIE We might have to do a Share the Mic Now reunion then. We got to do a Zoom party.

CARI You got to. You got to. A Zoom party.

LUVVIE We got to. Because I feel like everybody's... I'm connected with so many of the people who are still DMing, and who are like, "Oh my God, it's so amazing to follow." It's wild.

CARI But I think, and you guys did it in such a way that was so humbling. It would be nice to just acknowledge the founders and all the things that you all did. Y'all just doing the work. This the work. The work is beautiful. And the results of the work, the baby that you guys gave birth to was beautiful. And I think that it would be nice to just keep giving you guys your roses while you're alive. Because the whole key is that we're never acknowledged, right, for all the hard work we do. It would be nice to do that for you guys. You know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE Oh man. I think it would be dope to actually... Yeah. See everybody back on Zoom. [crosstalk 00:04:25].

CARI It would be so nice.

LUVVIE In the morning.

CARI 6:00 AM. I'm like, "We really working on life at 6:00 AM." Okay.

LUVVIE Till this day, my mind is still blown that we gave y'all 12 hours notice and was like, "Can you join us on Zoom?" And 75 people was like, "Sure."

CARI Wait, did you guys take a picture of that Zoom?

LUVVIE We have the video. I don't know if we took a Zoom picture.

CARI Okay. You need to screenshot that, and then post. I mean, because if somebody just took a moment and looked at the power in that Zoom, the power of everyone in their own individual fields and what they were doing. Girl, I was blown away. I was sitting in the Zoom like, "Oh, this is something," you know what I'm saying?

LUVVIE Blew my mind. I was like...

CARI It was something. It was something.

LUVVIE It was something. And we just keep continuing to do the work, whatever work that is, and I'm so proud of everybody too. And I'm so glad y'all said yes to us. Y'all say yes without question. Y'all didn't even go like, "What? No, who am I going to get?" Y'all said yes to us-

CARI But again, it speaks to everybody who was involved because we didn't think twice. We were like, "Of course, they not going to have us on some silly stuff."

LUVVIE Y'all says yes [crosstalk 01:14:30].

CARI They're not going to have us out here looking crazy. And we bout to change lives, let's change some lives. We can run the world. We really could. We would have had COVID solved.

LUVVIE Yo, had you put COVID in the lap of Black women, we would have solved it

CARI Girl, answered. Done. We would not be where we are today. Fact.

LUVVIE The world just needs to trust us more, which is why Kamala Harris is our next VP.

CARI Amen.

LUVVIE Amen. Amen. Okay.

CARI Amen. Amen. All right.

LUVVIE It's clean. So, I have one more question for you.

CARI Yes.

LUVVIE As you are doing all of this and being this dope Black woman, how are you taking care of yourself?

CARI Oh, good question. Good question. I'm glad you asked me that. What I have been doing lately, and this is something I haven't really done before until the pandemic hit, but the later parts of the pandemic. I've been listening to my body. So if I feel like I want to sleep in, or if I feel like I don't want to take Zoom calls that can be pushed to another day, or if I feel like I don't want to take meetings that can be pushed to another time when I have the mental energy. I do that. Last week I just cleared my schedule, I was like, "I can't. Not today." I didn't have it. I didn't have the energy, I wasn't ready, I wasn't engaged. So for me, when I listen to my body and when it says... Because I want to be at 100%. I want to sit and I want to talk and I'll be locked in if I'm talking to you, and I want to give 100%.

And that takes a lot. And we give 100%, if not more, all the time. So I will shut things down if it's possible in a way in which if it don't affect the bag. But I was shutting things down. As long as I can just sit in my little cocoon and rehab. So last night, girl, I'm in the house doing little things, nothing major. Last night at five o'clock I was like, "Let me just get into bed, and watch some mindless television and go to bed." And I went to bed at 11:00, that's early for me. And I was good. I woke up refreshed, hopped on the bike, did a little workout. I felt like a whole new person, but I've been doing that. And I haven't forced myself to do things I don't want to do. So I don't say yes to things that I don't want to do.

If I don't want to do it, I'm like, "Not right now," and then I think about it. I don't say yes right away, because we feel like we often have to say yes. So I don't say yes right away. I say, let me think about it. And then if I really want to do it, yes, of course. Let me get some time and then make sure I can focus on it. But that's for everything. Because sometimes I just don't want to do stuff. I don't want to do it, and why should I do it begrudgingly? Because all that does is take away from me giving back to someone else. Giving back to my family and friends.

And I also, I am a big believer in vacations. So we ain't been able to go nowhere, but I'm trying to plan a little vacation. Trying to get my little butt to Mexico again to sit down for a week or so. And just relax.

LUVVIE Yes.

CARI Unplug my phone. It's simple, but we don't do it. We say yes to everything, and I don't do that anymore. And then we don't put our phone down, and I don't do that anymore. And if I don't reply to certain people in my mind... It took me a while to condition myself, but I have to feel like it's okay that I didn't reply and the world is not coming to an end. If you're really my friend, you'll understand I'm busy or I'm taking a minute. Yeah.

LUVVIE That's it. That is it. That's a big part of what people are not doing where they're feeling overwhelmed, is they're not saying enough nos. Every yes, yes, yes. And because we're all behind the Zoom, everyone's thinking, "Oh, it's just Zoom." No, after your fifth Zoom of the day, you're probably like, "I'm finished."

CARI Done. Donezo. Done, donezo. My body is dead because it does take a lot. Even though you're sitting at the house, it does take a lot to sit and give and do, or whatever. It takes a lot to be locked in and be ready to participate in work. I know people don't think so, you sitting here thinking you're talking. No, but it's a lot. Trust me, and then you... It's a lot. So I say no, and I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that, or not answering right away. These are all things that don't make me feel as much pressure, and mentally don't take too much from me.

LUVVIE Yeah. Agreed. I bet. So how can people make sure they're supporting you right now? What is the thing that you work with?

CARI You have to... I want you guys to download the [VICE TV app and watch our show](#). We're coming back in two weeks, so I want you guys-

LUVVIE What's it called?

CARI To continue to watch it. It's called [Cari & Jemele: Stick To Sports](#).

LUVVIE There it is.

CARI And you have to make sure that you literally go and Google, because everybody has VICE TV. You just got to Google what channel it's on depending on your cable provider. So we want people to make sure they're watching our show and support it 100%. And then I have a [podcast called The Brownprint](#). Luvvie, we are-

LUVVIE Brand new?

CARI Girl, [The Brownprint](#) because we all winning in a different way. So I just started it. I want you guys to download it, and subscribe. It's really fun. And it's just about the life lessons. It's almost a mentorship if you will, in an hour. Where I ask people who've made it from all walks of life to just give us their three takeaways, and what they've learned. And then we translate that into a

podcast, and we'd be like, "Here you go ahead and take this free jewelry." Run with it if you like, go and get it going

LUVVIE Brownprint. She's had Elaine Welteroth on, she's had Boz on. It's, yeah, it's lit.

CARI It's good. We've got Misty Copeland coming this week. We had... I love Misty, she can do no wrong in my eyes. We had Draymond Green on, he's a basketball player, you know him. He's got this rough, tough approach, but he's just a teddy bear. But he talks about how he came up from Saginaw, Michigan, and he wasn't supposed to be where he is right now. And how his life has just been crazy, and how he is figuring out how to play the game and the game can't play him. So it's beautiful. It's just beautiful. We've got a bunch of folks on there, girl. And so it's all new, but that's good. And then obviously I do NBA on TNT. So the basketball season is over, you can support that when basketball starts back up.

LUVVIE Y'all just got to follow [Cari on the Gram](#).

CARI On IG. They follow on [the Gram](#) with all my jobs. With all my jobs, Cari Champion.

LUVVIE All her jobs.

CARI Follow me with all my jobs. Yes.

LUVVIE And you can watch her Instastories. I always like... Honestly, Insta stories is where I keep up with all my friends. I just be like...

CARI Yeah. Same. Same, same. Same

LUVVIE I'm like I feel like I know what's going on in your life just because I'm watching your Insta stories like, "Bet."

CARI That's the only way. That's the only way it'll work. I got to have you on my podcast, honey. I know that you're a busy lady, but I really want you to come on it. I really do. Okay [crosstalk 01:20:53]

LUVVIE Yeah. You know I'm coming. I was like, "She ain't invited me yet," y'all know she ain't invited me yet.

CARI No. Mm-mm (negative). No, you already know. I was like, it is happening. Can we do... Oh well, I'll talk to you later about that. I'll read my thought process. I want to call it Share the Mic, Luvvie's... Creator of Share the Mic, Luvvie, and what we're doing with Share the Mic Now. I would love to do two podcasts with you, but that's-

LUVVIE Yes. Listen, any time, I'm down.

Yo, Cari is amazing. It was so good talking to her about her journey as this woman in sports journalism. Being a Black woman who continues to excel, even though the world sends arrows our ways, and just

learning more about how she became this person who shows up as her true self. Be sure to follow Cari on social media. She's [@carichampion on Instagram](#). That's C-A-R-I C-H-A-M-P-I-O-N, that's Instagram and Twitter. And be sure to check out [Cari and Jemele's new show, Stick To Sports](#), and her [Brownprint podcast](#). Much love to Chicago Recording Company, who I've been partnering with from home to make sure I'm bringing y'all the radio voice as always.

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