



SEASON 1, EPISODE 4: PERFORMING SELF-CARE ONLINE

<https://www.blkirl.com/episodes/performingselfcareonline>

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

BLK IRL 00:00

Hello, I am Anuli Akanegbu and you are listening to the Black in Real life podcast.

MUSIC 00:10

[Intro music: "Wild" by Garth.]

BLK IRL 00:24

Our social interactions as humans require a fair share of performance. This is the part where that famous line from Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* is usually quoted. All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players. Whether you are an influencer or not your interactions require that you play, that you perform. Today's guest, Saleem Singleton says that performing self-care online is one of the ways that he honors himself. Saleem Singleton is a Brooklyn based men's skincare and beauty advocate and content creator. He's currently a contributing writer for *birdie calm* represents as part of their Bertie boy franchise, a native of Philadelphia, Saleem grew up expressing himself through acts of beauty and personal style. He also discovered his interest in media early on and has since combined his passions, His goal is to contribute to the inclusion of black men's voices in the beauty industry. Remember, at the end of each interview, I will come back to share a few key takeaways that stood out to me from our conversation. These takeaways will be supplemented with research from both academic and nonacademic sources to add further context and subjects that are brought up in the interview portion. For every episode, I will include the citations to weapons materials I mentioned, as well as some additional background we'd in for you on a black in real life website. Visit www.blkirl.com to nerd out. Okay, now without further ado, let's get into my conversation with men skincare and beauty advocate and content creator Saleem Singleton, also known as the Method Male. I actually read an article that she wrote for *Byrdie* about how beauty became your form of self-expression. So I wanted to start by asking you about some of the things in that article, because I do think that they are important in grounding our conversation. So one of the things that stuck out to me is how you wrote about your first trip to the dermatologist when you were in high school. And that was a time when you were dealing with skin issues, as you know, teens do, I definitely did. And one thing that struck me was your retelling of the experience you you had to lean on skincare advice from magazines like *SEVENTEEN*, which are predominantly catered to girls and women. And you wrote, although the magazines were mostly geared towards girls, I was somehow able to see myself within that aspirational space.



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So my question for you after that preamble is as someone who is now known as the Method Male, how were you able to see yourself in an aspirational space that may not have been made for you?

SALEAM SINGLETON 03:21

How am I now?

BLK IRL 03:23

Well, how were you back then able to see yourself?

SALEAM SINGLETON 03:26

Well, you know, I think the first thing is, is a lot of what that piece was about was essentially survival tactics for a young kid growing up in poverty, who was being you know, it was being projected upon me, you know, what my lifestyle may have been, like, you know, whether they're calling you gay or calling you feminine thing. So it's essentially for me about my identity. So I think I've always used my imagination to survive and not when I saw that world, and I and I saw things that I wanted to be a part of like being young and on TV and not in the projects and not poor and not bullied. I was, I was able to see myself in a quite literal sense, in the way that it connects to now is that when I didn't see any young black guys, I saw young black guys. And that's the only reason I was able to pursue a lot of different things that I have in my life like college, or, you know, going into public relations, even at one point pursuing music in a certain genre that wasn't predominantly black. So I think for me, it was about having a really strong will and a really strong imagination. And I knew that what I saw in the mirror wasn't it wasn't so much about acne as it was about really me wanting to feel attractive and me wanting to feel beautiful at a really young age. And I think what I saw that was geared towards women, I refused to deny myself to be a part of it. So I think I just kind of interjected any money that I may, you know, like I said, in the article, I will I will walk through the Pathmark market maybe two miles away from my house. By Clearasil, Noxzema you name it. And that and I don't know how, at that age, I was able to select those things for therapy, or for self-identification. But I had to simplify it, I would say it was it was my will, and my imagination and how I use that to survive where I was at that time, which was a place I didn't want to be. And also didn't want to be teased, and also didn't want to consider myself to be ugly, or unattractive. And skincare was something tangible, that I could purchase, that at the time was marketed to me in a way that made me feel everything would be better. And I had to be a part of that.

BLK IRL 05:41



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And you also in that article, you went on to write like, over time, your commitment to skincare became a defining characteristic for you. So could you talk about that? Like, what does the skincare the rituals involved in it mean to you as a person?

SALEAM SINGLETON 05:57

Very, very early, I think when I was that kid on the front set with the mint julep mask on, and I think, eventually, like my male friends, maybe not in a scale that they would now but I would get little questions. And there's a funny story, I was selling like wave kits in first grade. I always tell the story, I don't know why I'm not like a big entrepreneur, I used to sell wave kits. So I think, in retrospect, I've always in some way, shape or form identify with that, what we now know is the beauty world. So I think people started to immediately associate me with how much I love skincare products, how much I love media, what it means to be now maintenance, and self-care. Although I use beauty as the platform, I like to look at what I'm doing on a personal level, as what I'm performing is the physical manifestation of all of the self-work that I've done in my adult life. And I think my performance of the maintenance of my body is me honoring myself. And it's something that essentially with the method male is about the method itself is about the steps that you take to become the fully realized man that you want to be, which for me, was the root of this idea of going to the therapist and just really talking about I want to be I want to be I want to be and I would leave and realize like, oh, let me start to emulate these habits that I will go and tell my therapist I wanted to have, then I will go back and say Oh, hey, you know, I wouldn't book that camera. Oh, hey, I went and started to journal. And the method comes from method acting. And this this idea that an actor takes on a character and for a certain period of time, he never takes it off, he becomes that character. So self-care for me. And how it pertains to the method male on a personal level, is about me, is a piece of ritual that I use to become as close as close an idea of the man that I would love to be as possible. If that makes any sense at all.

BLK IRL 08:01

That's actually really interesting, especially the part where you mentioned method acting, because now I'm wondering, where does Saleam start and Method Male begin? Like, is it the same person? Or are there differences?

SALEAM SINGLETON 08:14

Really interesting question, actually, no, there, you know, there's no one The secret is there is no one Method Male and in the future, I would love for the Method Male to be a brand and not just something that's applied to me. But right now, it is an extension of who I am. on social



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media. There's an even throughout the years, there are so many parts of my life and myself that I haven't shared that I don't share. on my Instagram page, there are no mentions of me going to restaurants or going on a date or people that I hang out with. So I do like to think that the method mail is it's a, it's not a character. But I liked it. When I step into the studio or the studio mindset when that camera is on. My job is to communicate my journey through self-care and reflect that back to the people that are watching. And so I like to leave as much saline out of it. So it's a part of me, but it's not the wholeness of me. saline is a lot more complex, a lot darker, a lot more cynical, a lot more cerebral and deliberate and a lot of things overthinking. Whereas the method now I like to keep as much of that dialogue out of the equation, and just get straight to the performance of self-care.

BLK IRL 09:32

And how did you go about establishing those boundaries for yourself when you started putting some content online?

SALEAM SINGLETON 09:38

It comes very natural to me. I'm a Gemini, you know, and I think there's a lot of cliché things to be said. But I think creative. Geminis tend to be very deliberate in our mutability, but it's code switching. And I know it's really weird, like the effect that I have on camera by myself in my apartment versus says, me talking to you now or even with a friend. So I don't know if it's so much something that I have to think about. I know that, you know, like, there, there are tangible things like, I'm not going to be doing too much cussing, I'm not gonna be using him words. And you know, I'm not going to be talking about my personal dating life or drama. I recently decided not to complain about brands at all, because I now realize I can't do that. So it's weird. The Method Male space is almost sterile, compared to if Saleam had an Instagram page.

BLK IRL 10:34

And you did that on purpose?

SALEAM SINGLETON 10:36

Yeah, I do it on purpose Yes, absolutely. This This was when I started. Um, it hit me in 2014. Literally, well, not literally, but it would have hit me is that this was this was my purpose. I was in this apartment. I was standing right over there. And I remember I was coming up with the idea for domestic male and when the name was finalized, and there was this rush, and I had this vision, and it was not playing words, what I felt it was telling me lean into this, like, this is



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what you're supposed to be doing. I spent so many years not seeing Black men on YouTube, not being able to relate to the black man I saw on YouTube, not being able to use products that were being used in this new goldmine of content. So on one hand, I knew that I wanted to make content but on another, I felt like this could be my career. But it wasn't until 2017 when I decided to use Instagram that I became more consistent. You know, once I decided to use my page to create my videos, from that day forward was may have been November 2017. I completely stop communicating and selling although I still have years worth of posts left down there. A lot of that stuff. I was doing like a lot of like really young, you know, like, cryptic stuff, but not in a negative way. That's just my form of art. It isn't it just be I knew now I'm getting to work with you're asking, I knew that when I started this, that my goal, I felt very strongly in 2017. If I start doing this, this could be my job. And I had all these goals, you know, the cliché stuff like, Oh, I have my own products, I'll do all of these collaborations, I would have never known that I would have, you know, become a writer or a copywriter or consult brands. But I knew that I wanted what I was doing on my page from 2017 on to be about business. And I knew that I was building a brand.

BLK IRL 12:31

I definitely want to get more into the career part. But before that, I'm curious, when you your Instagram page, and before it was Saleam and now it's the Method Male. So you didn't create a new page, you just like added to the one you already had that was personal but now you went to like a more like professional persona.

SALEAM SINGLETON 12:50

Yeah

BLK IRL 12:51

How did that feel like you're like evolving into a new person?

SALEAM SINGLETON 12:56

I've done it a lot, you know, I came to New York is one guy that nobody called me Saleam until maybe 2014 or 15 when I came to New York, and maybe more started to hang out in New York, 05, 06 blah, blah, blah. I was a whole other in the Afropunk scene, you know, expressing myself through music. So I say that to say I had already reinvented myself back into Saleam for the first time in New York. Once I decided to stop pursuing that form of expression, I went back into PR and totally had to flip my mind all over again, from artists life and all that comes with that. So shifting into the method, male one, I had a lot of preparation, because I started in 2014 and was



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dabbling. And then to, this is what I want. So I just, I ordered all of this stuff, you know, I mean, like I've written this stuff down, I came up with the name domestic mail, I came up with this kind of like tagline creating a lifestyle for the man in progress. I knew that I wanted to be on a GQ level of being trusted by men for information. But I had no idea how I was going to get there. The only thing that I can tell you, for sure is that between 2017 and now, the only thing I didn't do was stop because I had plenty of times where I'm like, What am I doing nobody's watching these videos. I wasn't doing it to make money but I have to go make money so I can't be home. going through a lot of craziness, a lot of self-doubt, feeling invisible, using brands and them not even acknowledging that I was using that stuff, you know, not not asking for emails, you know, like it I was gonna do that for a long time. But I kept going because I knew I knew I call it like the it's just like the the craziness that comes along with being an artist you have to ride that wave of doubt. And feeling like what you're doing makes absolutely no sense and, and I think the only reason that I stuck through all that is because I knew that I wanted this to be my career. I knew I wanted to build something bigger than myself out of this.

BLK IRL 15:01

So what is that impact that you want to make?

SALEAM SINGLETON 15:04

I want to I would like to contribute to the normalization of black men's inclusion into the conversation of beauty particularly, is still such a loaded topic, the word beauty, gender expression, the taboo behind that, especially now, with so much conversation going on everywhere. I don't profess nor do I seek to become an expert or a guru, I would like to be able to be a voice, a voice in this conversation. within all of the there, there's so many different levels within this larger conversation of men, and self-care, and men and beauty. If we just talk about self-care, we have to leave products aside and start talking about mental health, which is extremely important. Although is often discussed and almost feels over discussed. Now. It's still something that's very new. And I find as a black man, and as a queer, black man, that my brothers are hurting. And we need love, we need love from each other. And I found that performing beauty on Instagram has brought me closer to so many different men. rappers, I'm talking about rappers, when you go to their page and his weed everywhere contacted me, telling me their most intimate secrets about how they feel about themselves. And that is why I started this and if there's any impact at all, it would be possibly it would be my if it's not big my contribution to developing that space as well. My my goals are to have a show, you know, I like to be you know, a Martha Stewart type of guy, I would like to go into the skincare and the beauty of course. But again, we have to broaden that conversation. There's the lifestyle,



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wellness element, mental health, and I have my own experiences within those things, and also a lot to say. So I like to also create and when I say brand, I don't mean like a lot of Instagram followers. I like for men, when they think about these things to go to my website or go to my Instagram or to think about something that they learn from my platform or my show. And I like to do that for the rest of my life and have it shift as time like when I'm in my 70s I wonder what that conversation will be like and I definitely want to be here for that.

BLK IRL 17:29

The gender conversation is one particularly in like the influencer marketing space. That is something I'm particularly interested in as well. Because even in the like research for this podcast, it's hard to find men that actually acknowledged themselves in as an influencer or doing beauty or any of the anything that you do. It's hard to find other men to like, acknowledge that they do it. So one, one thing I want to talk about is like language, right? Like I even think about the phrase male grooming and like how grooming in the aesthetic sense is associated with men. But why is it called male grooming and not male beauty? Whereas the activities shaving, plucking, tweezing are grooming rituals that both men and women do. But they're called beauty for women and grooming for men. Like what? What are your thoughts on that?

SALEAM SINGLETON 18:19

Okay, so while I'm just gonna say this, I could never Oh, and you can't take especially Black woman you I can't exactly compare. I guess what I'm trying to say is, well, while men really have a lot of growing up to do when it comes to our acknowledgement and care of women, we also specially Black man is very underlooked, the different traumas, trigger words. You know, the other day, I was on a Zoom on a FaceTime call, and I showed a guy, my Telfar bag, and he said, Why do you have a pocketbook? And that wasn't offensive, because it's like, okay, but that particular word is a word that may have been used between the 70s and the late 90s, by grandmothers who are raising their children's children. And it was a word that was used to, quite frankly, to gender police the behavior of these little boys. And he had just in that moment, projected that onto me. And it was a very specific word. I think that the marketing world in the product world likes to babysit men and I think that I think I think that companies think that men need to hear bro language, I think they need to hear a lot of really immature words. I'm not I'm trying not to name any any names. But I see a lot of YouTube ads that make commercials that are almost mocking of men. It's almost like you think that a man in order for him to digest a bar of soap that he needs a guy with a beer in this corny commercial that has no production value, and that's their idea of how to get a man's attention, these companies spend



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10s of 1000s of dollars to do this. So that's what they believe. My issue with that, if I'm not escaping your question is, we need to normalize men's inclusion in the beauty space, which includes using words like beauty, as it pertains to men, not being afraid to teach men that these acts as you said, those are, those are acts of beauty. And I know for myself, I'm making it especially as a very new thing. And that's what being being a Method Male is about, I'm learning as I go, is using this in my everyday language with my friends, with intimate partners, so that they also, it becomes normal to them that I use the word beautiful as it pertains to myself, of course, you'll get those out, you know, you're cocky, but then that's an opportunity for me to say, actually, friend, no, that's not what it is at all. Let me tell you why. Which is incredibly consistent with the work I do everywhere Anyway, you know, all this preaching. So I think, where we are as a space where masculinity is being protected, and this this like really false construct that is being held on to, so a lot of this language is designed to make men feel like their masculinity is not being threatened. That's the problem, the solution offline is, or at least what I've done is just putting the content out there, and the men will connect with it. As I stated earlier, the messages that I get from different types of guys of different races of different ages, it's not even about me, they just need it. And once it the information, so the more normal it becomes, the more you will see men, now we'll have to sacrifice what we consider to be masculinity. And a lot of us will have to probably come to terms with the way men are going to perform in the future. If you look at Korea, for instance, there's a lot of what people consider to be femininity, but a lot of these men identify as heterosexual. The good thing is, there's not a toxic stigma that these men might be gay, they just are they, they, they, you know, they become stars or lawyers. I predict the future of America will be that way. But But I think we're going to have to still learn to let go of the construct of gender, particularly masculinity. And I think the last thing I'll say about that is just as a man, I feel so good about myself, that I feel okay with the fact that I feel beautiful. And I've met so many men that are not getting that talk to me about beauty, and use the word beauty, and we handshake. And it's just like, such an amazing exchange. And that's what we need more of the problem with masculinity and marketing is that it's actually pulling us farther apart. And my goal is to help that conversation as much as I can.

BLK IRL 23:01

Do you believe that particularly beauty products should be marketed in a more gender fluid or genderless way because even on the women's side, there's definitely like a femininity that's performed to sell those products?

SALEAM SINGLETON 23:15



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I think, I think we, from a marketing standpoint, we should do what comes natural. I don't like the idea that we're, I don't like the idea of inclusivity and diversity, because we shouldn't even be asking for these things in the first place. That's the first problem. And so I think that we shouldn't be creating reactionary marketing that now speaks to men, I think that we should, when we talk about a product, we're talking about how a product works on the skin. And I think that language has to become more more generalized because we all have skin right. And I would, I would like to see is more, I would like to see more dark skinned women. I would like to see more dark skinned women with with tighter hair, I would like to see more dark skinned men and I would like to see the spectrum of shade and, and also gender. But to answer your question, I don't know if we need to go and rewrite, marketing copy. I think we just we may need to rely less on that people care about the gender language. Again, I mentioned men but I also think that marketing thinks that we are, we can't make decisions without gender markers, and we can.

BLK IRL 24:23

And how do you feel, like speaking to gender markers, how do you feel about the labels? Influencer versus content creator? Do you find them to be gendered in any way? Is there a preferred label that you go by yourself?

SALEAM SINGLETON 24:36

I don't find them to be gendered. I I prefer myself to be a content creator, is it's what I'm doing when I'm doing it. When I'm recording when I'm editing I'm creating content. I don't feel comfortable consider myself to be an influencer because I always say influencing what people do buy stuff. I don't I don't like that.

BLK IRL 24:57

Isn't that what you do sometimes?

SALEAM SINGLETON 24:59

Right? You just...Right. But let's say with a capital "I" that that's what I am doing. I don't know. That's what that's what I that's a part of what I'm doing, and it is what I'm doing. But that's not what I am. I am content creating, um, I think I think there's a fair term, there are a lot of people out there that are killing it at influencing, I'm sure I'm, I'm influencing all the time. But I don't like being called an influencer.

BLK IRL 25:25



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I find that to be pretty common in general, but also across, like gender lines. But aside from that, like why do you think there's a stigma with the term influencer?

SALEAM SINGLETON 25:37

Because the, you know, these are terminologies that some company makes up or is ours, and then they take it and regurgitate it to us and monetize it? So I don't think it's so much though the term it's what it's become influencer marketing, like, Oh, it's this thing now, you know, of this person who fulfills this function. And I think a lot of people might feel uncomfortable with with that. And I think a lot of people might feel this pretentious. And it's really just bashfulness for the most part. But again, it's like influencing what exactly. And I also think a lot of people feel they don't have, if you're not talking to a huge, huge people, you'll find that most micro influencers don't really consider themselves to be influencers. I think it's just; I think we're trying to hold on to our humbleness as long as we can before we have to just claim that we're influencing.

BLK IRL 26:29

And you consider yourself in the micro influencer category, since you just mentioned that?

SALEAM SINGLETON 26:33

Yes, yes.

BLK IRL 26:35

And do you produce content or do like influence and work full time?

SALEAM SINGLETON 26:40

Yeah. Yeah, well, you know, that Well, yes, I would I Instagram makes makes me some money now. Collaborations. Instagram has also allowed me to do consulting. I'm now writing not only am I writing for Byrdie, I just got on, I'm now contributing for Askmen.com. Which, speaking, speaking of all some of these previous topics that allows me to speak to in a completely different language than Byrdie to a completely different demographic of men and women. And then, and now I'm copywriting, which, once that floodgate is open I can, I can only imagine where that will go. But yes, Instagram, allows me to make content creating and influencing about beauty my job.

BLK IRL 27:28



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I realized recently, actually, through another interview that Instagram is about to turn 10 this year. And I was like, Where did the time go? Tell me about yourself 10 years ago, like, would you imagine that you would be doing what you're doing now?

SALEAM SINGLETON 27:43

You know, 10 years ago, I thought that I was going to be a indie alt-pop bad ass. Making like making crazy videos and deep interesting introspective dance pop music, I had no idea. I thought that maybe what I wanted to do was to have my own makeup collections. And I wanted to, I wanted to see how things were influenced. But I wanted what I was doing with my art and my music. I remember always saying I want to look out in the crowd and see men and makeup and drag queens and people in cosplay. So 10 years ago, I had a whole different idea of what I was going to be putting out and what I was going to be getting back. I definitely wanted to have some influence over men, Black men, being emotional and wearing makeup and being beautiful. But I had no idea I would be doing this.

BLK IRL 28:35

Where does that desire come from? I wonder like, you know, there's a lot of people who just do their skincare routine and call it a day and move on about their business. Why put it online?

SALEAM SINGLETON 28:44

Well, for me, I've always wanted to be on the TV. I Well, I've always been a writer. I've always been a storyteller, you know, in going back to that childhood space. And if I could even go back to that first question. I even saw myself on the actual TV in the ad. You know what I mean? So as I got older, and the world changed, and I knew I was like, I remember as soon as I got out of college, I had a bunch of friends, we all wanted to go into filmmaking. I remember having a conversation with him saying, Well, you know, like, you know, we might not go to Hollywood right away, but let's just shoot our own pilot ourselves. And everybody does know. And I'm mentioning that because I knew that I was going to get my foot inside of the media somehow. I went to college for PR because there were no film and PR made my ears stand up because I knew that that was the media. And the compromise was no I wasn't the client and I wasn't the star but I was definitely in that mix. saying we're going into production. I love to say I love coordinating projects. I love the even today the hecticness of all of this. I definitely want it to be on the screen. So I think when you when you take the whole journey, it For me, it's only natural to, to put myself in a space where I can be seen and heard, because it's what I've always wanted to do. And when you combine that with, I really do feel this is my purpose. It, I feel even more compelled to perform it, which is what I call when I'm recording it, because like



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when I'm doing it, I really am just doing my skincare, keep it moving. But I put my heart into this content. And actually, when I right before I shot my first video, I was afraid to start, I was in a really dark place. And what I was afraid of was like that last shot where I smile and do the piece on whatever that was going to be I was like, I'm gonna do whatever this video is. And when it's time for me to smile at the end, it's not going to be real. Well, I went and did that video and that first smile. And that first piece on, I meant it and I looked at myself and everybody, I'm having ice cream on my face. everybody's like, Oh my god, this is dope, I gotta try this. And hit me again. It was like, oh, all this time, all I had to do was start. So I have to do this, I want to do this. And, you know, I do it on camera, because my goal is to turn this into a media platform. And hopefully, in the future, there'll be other guys. And you know, I'll just be like, you know, like I said, like a Martha Stewart it won't just be about me. I want the method male to be a place an idea, like the Hair Club for men. I'm not just the president, I'm also a member you and I'm saying so I do for the camera, because I want to leave a lasting memory of everything I've ever worked hard for my entire life.

BLK IRL 31:39

Now I'm thinking about your younger self selling wave kits and how earlier you had said, you know, why didn't you become entrepreneur? Do you feel like entrepreneur?

SALEAM SINGLETON 31:48

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. Especially now it's, everything's happening so fast. I even recently contacted a lawyer. Because there's so many things going on between, you know, I got this post, I just got this one, I got one selected for a Paula's Choice program.

BLK IRL 32:07

I saw that. Congratulations.

SALEAM SINGLETON 32:09

Thank you. Thank you is. So speaking of getting what you asked for, you know, in my application, I you know, I'm like, Well, I know nothing about no money. They say paid. I'm like, cool. I didn't know what that meant. But I knew what I said I was like, I want to show I like I don't write for birdie and everything. But you know, for me, that's not the extent of where I would like to, to hold my conversation. Now that our God it is almost I have everything I need to make that next step to materialize what it is I want to show everyone. So I'm always losing. It'll get to me, but um, what was the question one more time I almost lost it.



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BLK IRL 32:46

Do you see yourself as an entrepreneur?

SALEAM SINGLETON 32:48

Oh yeah, Yes, I do. And, and I find, thank you, I found that I went even if I didn't, I have to, that's what I was getting to. Because when quite frankly, and I know you wanted to talk real Anyway, when money starts changing hands and invoices start getting paid, you know, Uncle Sam will come calling, you cannot claim that stuff all you want, he's going to see these transactions, it will behoove you mean to, you know, for me, this won't be my first LLC, but to form an LLC, and you know, take all of those steps, obviously, all of those things that people think of have, you know, my LLC my DBA. Also, I've always been planning to have a back end creative agency. So that's something that I that, I don't know when that's something that I could share, or course or take a client on. But I've been working on so many things on the backend. So it's almost like everything came to me. And even if I didn't plan on being an entrepreneur, I have to I have to protect my name. Now. I have to, you know, everything from the URLs that I think of immediately going by them, I have to make sure that you know when I'm in the store, that I'm not rude to the person because everybody in Bushwick knows everybody, so it's like, I'm running a business now, when, even before COVID when a person would come up to me like are you that dude I'm gonna like oh, you know, I'm smiling at them. I'm talking to them because this is a business. So yes, I do. Whether I want to or not have to see myself as an entrepreneur now, more than ever, and I and I think every content creator, every young or young at heart, black person that is creating something tangible, just start to look at themselves as entrepreneurs as soon as possible, because eventually is going to go there and it's better to be ahead of yourself. Then the wave hit, you're like, I don't have any contracts. I have no clue what I want to what my rate is. So yes.

BLK IRL 34:58

That was my conversation. That's Saleem Singleton, also known as the method male. I want to focus today's takeaways on the theme of performance, since it is an important aspects of Saleem's work as a content creator. Remember, for each episode, I will include citations to the reference materials I mentioned, as well as some additional background we'd in for you on the black and real life website. Visit www.blkirl.com. To nerd out my own research positions influencing as a form of labor that involves particular notions about the presentation of self. I am inspired in part by the work of Erving Goffman, who viewed social interactions as a form of performance theater. Erving Goffman was a sociologist who pioneered the study of social interactions in everyday life, following golf men's lead in the context of this podcast, we can



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cast social media influencers, as performers, whose performances are guided by societal conventions, and are informed by the expectations placed on their actions by others and themselves. Saleam is a great example of this. In our conversation, he talks about his desire to normalize the conversation about men and beauty. We also talked about how he creates boundaries between his online persona, the method male and who he is offline. He describes Selene as more complex and cerebral than a method male whose actions are more informed to an extent by the expectations an influencer or content creator has to be a good partner to brands. For example, He shared that as a method male, he tries to refrain from person or publicly criticizing specific brands. This may differ from how other influencers or content creators maintain their online personalities. But these are choices that Saleam made for himself and his online performances. These choices are elements of what Goffman will be referred to as Saleam's personal front, in the book the presentation of self and everyday life. Goffman defines personal front as the items of expressive equipment that we most intimately identify with the performer himself, and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes. Goffman explains that elements of personal front include clothing, speech patterns, facial expressions, bodily gestures, and the like. Even a peace sign. The saline waves at the end of each of his videos on Instagram is an example of a personal front, which in our interview he admits to doing consistently in order to maintain brand recognition. I was particularly struck by the commentary that Saleam made about gender and the ways that brands reinforced traditional gender roles to sell products through the implementation of reductive tropes, our conversation about gender and Saleam's goal to normalize the conversation about men and beauty makes me think about Judith Butler's essay about the ways that gender is constituted through performative acts. And this essay Butler explains that gender is a no way a stable identity or locus of agency, from which various acts proceed. Rather, gender is an identity that is tenuously constituted through a stylized repetition of Acts. In other words, it is the stylization of our bodies to our everyday mundane gestures, movements, and enactments that contribute to the performance of a gender itself. Saleam has a keen understanding of this, as he shared in our conversation by performing beauty online over and over again, Saleam makes it possible for other people, particularly men, particularly black men, to feel comfortable doing the same. As Butler writes a constructed identity is a performative accomplishment, which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. In the case of Saleam performing beauty online allows him to accomplish two of his goals, the first goal which is to honor himself, and a second goal, which is to inspire other men to honor themselves to saline beauty isn't just for a woman, it is for everyone. Lastly, since I am talking about performance, I should talk a bit about the name Saleam chooses to go by online, the Method Male. Saleam's online persona, the Method Male comes straight from the practice



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of method acting, according to Backstage.com, at its most simple, the method is an internal psychological technique that asserts an actor can train themselves under a regimented practice to behave realistically under imaginary circumstances. As Saleam tells it he has essentially been a method actor since he was a kid back when he used his imagination to insert himself in the pages of beauty magazines and television programs that were not necessarily made for him. Their predecessor to method acting is a system, which is an approach to act and created by this teemed act and teacher Constantine Stanislavski. This system is a psychophysical model to acting that revolves around Stanislavski's concept of the "magic if." Actors were encouraged to consider what they would do if they were in the circumstances of the characters they were playing. Stanislavski started teaching his system approach in 1909. Lee Strasberg, the famed acting teacher developed his own version of the system in the 1920s, which has over time become the preference of actors who utilize the method act and approach. Some practitioners of the Strasburg method include Maryland Manuel, Daniel Day Lewis, Hilary Swank, and the late Heath Ledger. You have just listened to a production of the black in real life podcast hosted by Anuli Akanegbu. Developed by Anuli Akanegbu scripted by Anuli Akanegbu, edited by Anuli Akanegbu. With research support by Anuli Akanegbu. The music was graciously provided by Garth, whose single "Wild" can be streamed on anywhere you can find music. Thank you. And remember, the people you follow online are also Black in Real Life.