



SEASON 1, EPISODE 5: GET IN LOSER, WE'RE GOING VIRAL

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

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

As a recovering marketing industry professional, I've heard the phrase "going viral" more times than I would like to be count. I fielded many requests from clients who were eager for my team and I to create social media campaigns that would go viral. But here's the thing about viral marketing: it's a farce. Whoever promises you that they can make a campaign that will automatically go viral is a false prophet unless the prophet in question has a lot of celebrity connections. Because yes, the participation of a celebrity, multiple celebrities if you have the budget, does help content spread quickly. I've got to be honest with you, viral moments are often situations of chance and surprise, it's hard to predict what kind of content will resonate with the population of people enough to rapidly spread. Sometimes marketing is like throwing spaghetti at a wall. You never know what is going to stick. But the idea of going viral on the internet is fascinating, nonetheless. What does it mean to go viral? And how does it feel when it happens? Today's guest SOFIYAT IBRAHIM is here to share what it's like from her own personal experience of going viral five times in a span of three months. Sophia Abraham is a Washington, DC area based communications professional in the international affairs industry, as well as a social media influencer with over 450,000 followers across multiple platforms including YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter online. Sofiyat, who typically goes by her nickname Sofi is known as "The Odditty" spelled with two T's if you follow Sofi online, or are one of the hundreds of 1000s of people that have seen any of her viral videos then you know of her vibrant personality, she is the literal embodiment of "positive vibes only" and she has a master's degree in peacebuilding to prove it. 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 to subjects that were brought up in the interview portion. For every episode, I will include citations to the reference materials I mentioned, as well as some additional background reading for you on a black in real life website visit www.blkirl.com. To



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nerd out. Okay, now without further ado, let's get into my conversation with Sofi, also known as "The Odditty."

@The_Odditty (content snippet) 03:02

Let me hear you say your bad fish with your black bits.

BLK IRL 03:05

I actually first learned about you the way a lot of people have learned about you. Yep, yeah, I came across a video, the one of you advocating for people to stop falling into societal ideals about what a normal body is supposed to look like. And I know you've made that in support of Jackie Aina, who is another content creator and entrepreneur. And it was like after she had a video of herself in a bikini and people started poking at her like, what are those dark bits? And what is this? And like discoloration of the bikini line? Which, you know, is normal.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 03:37

Yeah.

BLK IRL 03:37

So you came up with the video. And you or you just had to shut that down. So can you tell me more about like, why did you decide to release that video? Like, what were you feel at the time that you wanted to say?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 03:48

Yeah, I think for me, it was actually interesting. That posted a bikini video before Jackie posted hers. And it was a white bikini and I was gonna finish it all for a brand I will not be named because they are not one of the best right now. Well, I did this YouTube video and I remember sending the video to my friends and I was like, Oh my god, can I post it? She's like, Oh, no. Why don't you put foundation on your side because they're dark. And she didn't mean this in a negative way. This was more so like conditioned right? She was like, "Oh yeah, the thing is too dark. People are gonna talk about it. Put some foundation on it."

BLK IRL 04:19

I didn't know people do that.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 04:20



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Oh people do that. That's really, if you're going to post a video online, you're gonna put foundation or some like bronzer or something on your body. Before you post a video apparently this was a thing as I was sitting there like I said, it's other girlfriends who she said the same sentence like four or five of my friends and they all said yeah, like it's dark. But that's what you have to do if you want to be comfortable putting it out and I was sitting there going, Oh, I don't want to do that. I feel like a lot of work and what are they gonna say I literally I was coming from a place of it's gonna stain my white bikini it's going to do this. I don't want to do that. But like, I say love yourself regardless. I mean, it wasn't insecure about it. But the fact that they kept saying that made me feel insecure. Like oh, shouldn't it be black I thought everybody's was black like what's going on? Am I different as I remember putting out this video, and it didn't do as well as my other videos at first. And I got a couple of screenshots from weird people of course, like, Oh, I was loving her until I saw the size a little take screenshots of my inner thighs and put it on Twitter. I remember going Oh, my friend was right. They were right, I should have put the foundation on. And so I just forgot about that situation. So and Jackie is someone we all look up to like she's a quintessential black woman who's gorgeous. She's, she's in her bag, she's making you know, she's making a name for herself. And, to me Jackie does no, she does no wrong in terms of like beauty and everything. And so when she put that video up, I was like, Oh my god, Jackie has this too and she didn't put any foundation on. And for her to then show a video talking about it. I was like, this is something that everybody goes through, even me like, and at that point, I think I was I like maybe 20-30,000 followers then and I was like, I just want to do this for people who are not as big as Jackie who are just regular girls like me and say like, honey, if Jackie is having complaints. Little ole me is having complaints. We all have this thing why are we shy about it? And I think after I did that the support and Black woman just reflecting and been like people of color in general just reflecting and saying, Oh my God, we have to face this. We have to have, you know, discoloration here if we're going to face it like, it's normal. Like when we just you know, embrace it. It was it was interesting. It was nerve racking, posting that, but I think now I'm generally a lot more comfortable walking around with my black bits like what, everybody has it. What you gonna say about it. Yeah.

BLK IRL 06:43

Last time I checked that video had almost half a million views on Instagram alone, like did you imagine it was gonna blow up?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 06:51

No, I did not. I did not. I think for me, I thought it was gonna blow up on Twitter because I've been having a couple of viral videos on Twitter. And I was just like, it was gonna be one of the



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other ones when Instagram not necessarily but the reception from black women was insane. And I think this was something that a lot of us were not allowed to talk about these things. You know, we don't talk about things that make us insecure because we weren't away from them. We think they're normal. And so I think I was touching a part of women that they will shy away from they will be scared about and to see someone just willy nilly go, ma'am, what was very empowering and I think that's why it went as it went viral was it and I'm excited. I'm grateful for the opportunity to put some course on life people.

BLK IRL 07:41

So you are on Instagram, you're on Twitter, but you're also on YouTube. And on YouTube, we have a video you talk about having gone viral five times in three months. Like that's a that's that's insane. But I want to hear from you. When you say you've gone viral what does that word viral mean to you? How do you measure it or define that?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 08:07

I think virality to me is when more faces see your face without knowing your story multiple times. And what that looks like is people who've never met you before who know nothing about your platform see you and they relate to whatever it is you're doing when they find you funny entertaining and does he continue to repost you and then we share until before you know it you doubling your following Are you doubling engagement Are you you're seeking an audience that more often would have been 100 people but now is 20 million people and what and that can be so nerve wracking, especially on the internet, because morality comes with a lot of issues. It comes to a lot of stressors, of course, but same time, like it's a unique opportunity to create a name for yourself and you know, touches many hearts as you will hopefully want to touch. So yeah, viral just raised. It's a unique experience where where someone oftentimes sort of reaches a group of people that they will never, maybe there was a reach, they will never come to the corner of the internet because they they just want a new forte. And this is bad for you to be able to reach different corners of different different types of people. I think it's important like I think when I went viral the first time I had a lot of people from South Africa, a lot of people from South Africa and a lot of people from France for some reason it was so

BLK IRL 09:26

Oh, you don't know why?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 09:27



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I don't know why for my video, and then people would like retweet. And then all the mentions would be in French. And I was like, what is going on because they I think maybe someone probably in French media and taking my video and then put some French in it and then it went viral there and so like I would have never met like linked with French audience because it's just my my English everything is just not with that audience. But when you go viral, you're going you're going to different nooks and crannies of Internet to sort of reach different people.

BLK IRL 09:58

When was the first time you went viral? I'm curious as to how long you were creating content before you first went viral. And then what that first experience was like. Three years? People make it seem like it's overnight like she just like came out of nowhere. She's been doing work for three years.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 10:07

Three years. I remember that because I think I was talking to a friend. She was saying how she'd heard folks say, like, "Oh, like all of a sudden The Odditty just blew up." Like, I just blew up? Yo, I've been in this game since 2017. I was a college blogger. And I was a vlogger for a year that didn't work out. And I started doing modeling [...]. I did so many things for three years and this I just crossed 10,000 followers in March and I was ecstatic I was like, I can swipe up now, I'm excited because the engagement. I was at 2,000 followers on Twitter. I was non-existent on TikTok. And Instagram was definitely my main platform of 10,000 odd people, my odd family. And I remember posting this video on Twitter. I just sent it to one of my friends, the same friend, I think I send everything to. And I sent it to one of my friends, and she was like, "Oh, that's ridiculous. Post it on Twitter. People will laugh about it." So I was trying to in this outfit. I was like, oh okay, cuz I always want to try and clothes and send it to my friends. And I posted a video. And I think in two hours, I had like, 200,000 views. And I was like, wait a minute. And this is what goes viral? I had no makeup on. I was not ready. My, my bio wasn't even ready for y'all. Nothing was ready yet. If I had known I would've prepared, I would have had like some things in place. And I was that day, and I just kept watching the numbers go higher. My follower count on Twitter went from 2,000 to about 80k in, in a week. And luckily, it was like two, three days. And I just remember sitting there and aww. People were like loving me and supporting me and just continuing to share my video and they wanted more videos. And I was like, Oh my God. And then from Instagram, I doubled from 10k to 20k. And then 30k. And just that same week. And I just remember going Oh, wow. So what I didn't know, was next day, right? Do I keep posting I might just continue what I was doing. And I think it was it was an interesting experience for sure. And I genuinely, I think being able to be a part of I've been doing this for so



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long allowed me to be a little bit more prepared to know, and to continue to also stay in myself and say, although this great thing is happening for me, this is still the message I want to pass and this is still the one I'm gonna pass my message regardless of the amount of eyes still coming and looking at me.

BLK IRL 12:38

Yeah, you've hinted at this. The interesting part, I want to dig more into, like, how did going viral impact your life even let's say, offline?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 12:49

Right? It's actually funny enough, not, besides being, which is crazy, being recognized when you go out at several different places. Overall, it's been a really, really good offline, it's, I feel like I'm still the same person. I'm still Sofi, you know, when I go to brunch, my waiter recognizes me and they might give me two or three drinks. Or I'm walking on the street and someone's like, "Oh, my God are you The Odditty?" And, I'm like, yeah. But so I've been a lot more recognizable. And it's been a lot more [...] from that aspect and but besides that nothing was really fazed. I think people expect that I think they expect that you're either swimming in money or now you're, you're famous that you have this and that and I'm like, no, not really.

BLK IRL 13:34

Your family, your friends? It's the same?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 13:36

Yes, family and friends, still the same. I think I've also I've worked really hard to get to where I am now. And I think I think I've mentioned this before too, my confidence to even be able to post a video on Twitter shows how I've grown in my person now. Right? So I would have never posted a video on Twitter two years ago, a year ago, a couple of months ago, last year even, right. I would've been too shy. I wasn't, I wasn't open to a lot of people in my energy. I wasn't sure I was able to protect that energy. And because I've gone through a lot that many struggle with energy I had. And so I just allowed myself to do it and say, you know what, it's okay. It's okay to let people in and it's okay to just share this with the world, you're not going to always have your favorites and people are going to hate you. Sometimes they're not going to enjoy what you do. At the end of the day, like it's still you and you just need to remember that and so nothing has really changed family and friends are still there. They're more supportive than ever.

BLK IRL 13:39



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There's a part in your video about going viral over you said that now is your time to exist. And you're speaking a bit about it, but I want to learn more about that journey, too, because it takes it does take a lot of confidence to post a picture of yourself online wearing any type of clothes. You know like anything so like How did you even decide I want to start posting pictures of myself online? And then how do you deal with the commentary that comes from that?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 15:08

Ah, that's a great question. I don't know if you can deal with it. Honestly, I don't know if you can. You can manage it, right? I think what it is, is being able to take care of yourself. And when I say I tell people this all the time, like, y'all this is this is Sophie, and this is my box, and nobody comes into the box, nobody steps in you, whatever attacks you have whatever negativity you're bringing, it bounces off the box, some things might damage the box. And that's why I'm going to take two weeks, after three months to recharge clean up my box, and I bring the box right back to the front, and they get hit again. And again, you know, and again, you know, swallowed, oh, whatever. And then I'm going to recharge again, I think that's something I do for myself. So when I first environment, this guy gets to know me, I went from 10,000 odd family members to 100,000. Now I'm at 140, something across almost all my platforms, and I'm reaching over 400 to 500 people, 500,000 people, and a lot of those people might not be cheering on me cheering on for you, a lot of people might just be, you know, wanting to see you fail. And I think one thing I've learned growing up, I think being Nigerian, you grow a lot, you got thick skin really quickly, growing up. But one thing I learned for myself is I am the only person capable of keeping myself happy period. And you're the only person capable of making sure you are happy. No one else, no validation from the internet, no validation from your family, my mom can come in and say be happy now. And I still can't be happy unless I am happy. And so how I maintain that happiness is ensuring that I am the best version of myself possible and working on me ultimately. And I when I say that I tell people I'm like that my journey on the internet isn't to serve other people, right is to work on myself and share that with you. So everything I post is a story. It's a journey. If I ever have this collaboration with a fashion designer that pick the outfit, and I would outfit my caption will relate to my experiences were in the house that I feel right now I'm doing today, because in many ways, I'm honestly just always sharing my story in hopes that somebody might be inspired by it. I think that's my way of continuing growing like I took a two week break from the internet the fastest, like not posting anything, not stressing myself, because I just genuinely I do that. A lot of times, I always would know, I this is my way of doing self-care is if I post the content back to back for about three months, I take a break for like two weeks, maybe a week and I don't post anything I recharge I keep so I started my two I've already kept a store of the love you give me an up and co positive quadrant and I just use



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that built on box back together just to make sure I'm stable I'm good again to put on more content to share myself with the world and I think that's been one way to sort of help myself and help my mental health.

BLK IRL 17:52

Have the pandemics whether it's COVID-19 or even the racial uprising, have they impacted the way you feel about content production and this desire to want to take more breaks?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 18:04

Yes and no, I think...I don't know if I'll get flack for this, I don't know. But this is how I feel about it, right? I think in a lot of ways, there's this saying, this quote about your existence in itself is a resistance right being black your existence is the resistance to the world and the things that are happening and I think a lot of people in this time feel really down. COVID-19 has hit a lot of people. My brother's a doctor he's at the frontlines of the COVID-19 war in Nigeria. I know firsthand what that looks like scared for your loved one and hoping they, you know, they don't fall sick, they're taking all the proper precautions. My mom is over 60 she's in that age where she might fall sick to what does that look like if she's not getting the proper health care. I have friends and family around me. I have people who are not taking this too seriously and people who are taking this too seriously. There's a lot going on right but I think I like I said I maintain my space, I keep myself educated but I also know like I need to exist constantly I can't stop because once you stop you allow yourself break down you allow yourself give up you allow yourself think twice about your power your strength well once you continue you address the things that are happening but you continue to show that you're capable of so much more I think that helps you and I think I'm also, I put the responsibility on myself that I am able to help other people laugh in this really really tough time and if I can do that for someone else, and still have my energy and peace intact, I would love to. I'm there I'm open field and with the racial injustice that has been happening, I'm right there in DC at the center of it. DC is right there out my window. And it's it's tough. It's been hard to exist in spaces where you feel like you don't belong. And for a long time have felt that way. Well, I always say like my existence is resistance. And I remember when I remember thinking Black Lives Matter movement and folks were posting on TikTok and we were like Oh, don't post anymore on Instagram, don't post yourself. This is our moment. And I remember sitting there going, No, dang it no post that shift. I didn't mean to curse, but post it exists, show them that you are not going to be let down by the things that are happening because they and we all know who they are, they're still posting, they're still getting that money, they are still in that system, we're making the system work for them. And you're still, you're still being pushed out, even within your resistance. But if you're existing in



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that space, and you're fighting back, while making sure you're protecting your peace, that and that's what works best for you. And that's what works best for me. So I remember during that period, I would post a lot about Black Lives Matter. But I also post level what I was doing, and the ways I was helping, and it was I was also taking care of myself to show people that you can exist in pain, and you can exist in pain to fight for other people, while also maintaining your peace, because the oppressor is still doing just that they're still existing, and they're still living. They don't, they don't feel a sweat. A lot of times I was in here, you know, tweeting and donating, and I would see these walking around, I had no camera or ask friends who did not even know what's going on, because they were not educated. And they were white friends who support other people of color who just did not care about the situation. I remember feeling so down like, I don't want to post because I'm fat. Well, here you are, what you should be you should be posting you should be a good ally, but you're there living your life, getting your back doing all that stuff. Why can't I exist to whilst they're resisting, and I think that's oftentimes My message to people is exists, your existence is your resistance. And you deal with these, these situations and scenarios, the best way you know how to inform me that we're still posting still Friday, while also maintaining that smile on my face?

BLK IRL 21:38

How do you deal with that? You? You've talked about this before? But how do you deal with the performative nature of being an online personality? Because there is like the idea like everybody should post, but then how do you manage to the type of desire to post a can be performative to look like you care, but you don't actually care for some of those people who want to be allies, or just even yourself like this pressure to maybe maintain some type of persona online.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 22:04

Right? I think that's the thing though, for me, I've never been performative. And I don't think a lot of people I know are but a lot of times we performative social media, as folks who are not in it for the right reasons, right. And then you get and I oftentimes can't speak to that, because I don't understand it. Nor do I respect that idea of social media. I don't sort of buy into it. I don't get into it. But I think for me, when when you choose to share yourself online, in many ways, oftentimes concert was performative, right? Because you're in your shoes. Before I post anything I'm clicking through, and I'm reading through what I'm posting that day was I know what I'm delivering, right? So in that way, I'm sort of showing sharing myself, it with a story or with a caption, and so on, but as long as you're doing that authentically, it's the intention behind it. And oftentimes, I just hope that people are oftentimes intentional about being being



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better people when they post online, and I can't speak to someone whose performance because I don't know their intention when they post it if I do see and I'm like, yeah, you never talked about that, so why are you talking about it now? There's a way about it, but I would adjust it you know, reach out. I have friends who are influencers, friends who are, you know, who are in this space with me that we've had these conversations about what do we do in these spaces? How do we help them and I think we don't, we can't pass judgment or faults? We don't know how they're sort of choosing to exist in these spaces. I think as long as we can show that we supported and people we just hope people are having the best of intentions and that's all we can sort of do honestly because social media is a vast, vast it's a vast thing that we all we oftentimes aren't in people's heads to understand what they are doing, yeah.

BLK IRL 23:35

The version of yourself that you post online, do you feel like that's your full self? Do you like reveal everything about yourself? Are there parts that you kind of curate?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 23:47

Funny enough that you mentioned that? So I had a brand deal with a brand the other day and I remember like they asked me to curate a concept in the context is this and I was like, oh, I'll do that. I'm just gonna post because I enjoy your brand. And I'm like well, we we also we want something that at least we can you know read over to review to see if you do that. Oh, okay, sure. So I knew I was moving in I knew I was honestly going to be choosing with my friends but oh, I'll use this brand and I used it anyways to cheers with my friends and I incorporated that into the brand was like oh my God it's not curated but we enjoyed it because that's still you and like I feel like I've struggled with that with being a social media influencer because I'm not curated anymore. Anyone knows me I am the opposite of curated I would be one minute I'm sitting in my room as an expert I'm on up doing a video and posting you're like oh my god i just I want to do that and I'm going back to bed or I'm doing this in terms of I genuinely only share stuff social media when I want to. I of course I you know I had filters I you know I edit if I want to make sure things are clean which was of course I like things pretty everyone does. When in many ways I forget what the question was but I think with curate, with curation especially for me, that's not how I am. I think that also speaks to my name The Odditty, because I choose to be unique. And I choose to sort of show the world who I am authentically. And when it's when your curated, it sort of takes, I feel like it takes in many ways the authenticity out of it. When I say curated, I mean, you're initially not who you say you are. Well, I'm not talking about when you you, you'd like an aesthetic, nothing that's different. Like if I like to wear pretty dresses, only yellows on my social media, I'm curated. But also that's what I enjoy doing. Right. But I



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think in many ways, is making sure you're intentional about what you're sharing and sharing that the way you would delight doing the best. And for me, that's brands. I thought, I post maybe once or twice a week, and they like, Oh, we post more, you know, do this. And it's like I don't I don't want them to call. It seems like a lot of work. And this is fun for me. I never wanted to be a job. I think the preserve my energy. I wanted to always make me happy. And the moment it's not making me happy. I don't think I want to do it anymore.

BLK IRL 26:05

Are you a full time content creator?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 26:07

Oh, god, no, no. No, I am not. I am currently actually job searching in the international development field. Yeah.

BLK IRL 26:14

Oh, wow. So how do you? How do you deal with like the balance and like this work you do online versus like the work you do offline? And even just like maybe potential coworkers? Do they? Have you had any instances when people are like, Oh, she's popular online?

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 26:28

Yeah, I've heard that a lot. I'm actually, um, when your job searching while doing so well, on social media, you get a lot of questions in interviews, like, alright. And I'm like, yeah, that means I'm great at social media management. I'm also a great Communications Manager, just throw that out there. I know, these jobs are available, because clearly, I'm doing so well. But it's I think it's been good. I think the fact that I have such good energy, and my platform is about my persona has helped me so to hone in on that. But it's something I'm still learning to balance because I didn't think I was going to blow up as quick as I was hoping I would have some time to plant blenders. But if I blew up this big, and I'm job searching has allowed me to sort of see the intersection with how do you how does this work in Madison square footage, my Master's in peace building, I was just working with my passions for guild education. Well, I just finished a research paper on gender equality and international development, what that looks like for programmatic guidance, for instance, or marriage. Now, I might be working with Neutrogena on an ad campaign that is fighting for gender equality. And gender based violence prevention in sister reaches in Africa, right? And that's literally the few things I want to do. Right? I want to use your personality to push for a good word. And I'm not only doing that just as a content creator, I'm doing as an educated content creator, someone who has done the research. But if



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you're coming to me, like, Oh, we love this campaign, I'm talking about Oh, can I see what's behind the campaign? Can I talk to the program designers? Can I talk to people who are working on it? Can I see what the research has been? Can I do this? I looked at my girl, we split the photo, I'm like, Oh, I know you want a photo. But I also want to educate you to make sure you're doing the work behind the scenes. I think that's what that's what I enjoy doing. And I hope that but I think he's got a platform for I think from anyways, that's what I want my platform to be is I think, I think Tracee Ellis Ross, I think about this, right? And she does incredible work with charities and foundations. And she's such an educated, brilliant woman. She's also really goofy. And she has fun on social media, and she's excited to live. I mean, that's something I want to do I want to I want to share my passions, in my research, focus, and so on with the world while also being goofy and experiments. Because what can I do both?

BLK IRL 28:43

Why can't you do both? Right? And this reminds me of something you were saying earlier about, like this box that you create for yourself like boundaries. And it makes me think about how people really only see you through a box like a screen? And are there maybe misconceptions that people have about you just based off of like, what they feel about you from the screen? Like, have you had to deal with people thinking about you one way, but you know who you are? And it's not that way.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 29:13

Yes and no, I would say this in terms of right of like morality, people can see in different ways, like morality, spiritually. How you are. Do you conduct yourself [...] there's so many ways because you're a person, I think my message is oftentimes is to "be you," period. So it's helped me hone that in. But also I think when you're someone who is goofy online, people might forget that you also have a brain. And so... She got a Masters, y'all!

BLK IRL 29:40

You know, I got a whole master's with the research and everything. And I want to get my PhD in the next few years. And so actually, hopefully next year, [...] I'm applying for programs especially right now to hopefully get admission into some universities and I'm excited about it but people would never know that you because if you go through my blog and you go through my work, you'd see. Oh. So someone just tweeted me like, Oh, my God, Sofi's blog is incredible. And like, people don't really read it. But I write a lot. I enjoy writing, too. And I think it's interesting because I think the world needs people that way. You can't help it. You oftentimes want to know how this person fits into the equation, right? They don't fit, you're worried or



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fearful, but like you try to fit the box in there. And so I think that's why again, I'm The Odditty, right, you oftentimes don't know what to expect. So I'm just, I like to surprise people. And I think it's funny when you're like, Oh, it's thinking about this [...] like, Oh, you knew that, like yeah I told you that, and they just move on from there. I want to end or end our conversation with one last question for you. Because everything you've said, even saying today, it's really, it's really been thought provoking. I really appreciate your candor to just learning behind the scenes of what it means to be a content creator what it means to be a human, a black person, specifically, today. So my last question for you is, what does it mean to be a black person for you right now, that could be this month? It could be today. Time is whatever you want it to be.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 31:20

That's a huge question, right? Because in many ways, I didn't know I was black until I moved to America, right? Because I lived in Nigeria. I've only been in America for 6, 5 years.

BLK IRL 31:31

Oh wow.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 31:32

Yeah. So it's interesting, but I think I would say, to be dynamic, that's the word I want to use that word because I want to explain what that means. Because I love I want to say, share this, because I'm in this in this box right now, where I'm going viral a lot on Nigerian Twitter. And so I have a lot of Nigerian followers with me here in America, right. And so I'm learning and I speak in Yoruba a lot, like I'm oftentimes like, I just break into Yoruba when I'm excited. And nearby when you've been on the train when listening, and I've been getting feedback from brands and from managers that maybe I should start to speak more English. Maybe I should start to you know, you know, catering to a lot more a broader audience so I can attract a lot from different people. And I'm like, what for? I didn't know I couldn't do that. Because they're like, well, you're speaking to black women, but you can't talk to black women if they don't understand you. And I had to pose a question, who are black women? They just African Americans? Are you talking about Jamaicans you're talking about Caribbean people? Are you talking about Africans like, who am I supposed to be talking to that I'm not relating, by speaking the way I'm speaking. And I think that's something I'm also starting to question that dynamic, because it's nuanced with with however you're doing but you're constantly having to change, change in terms of adapting to things that life has thrown at you, right? One day, you're walking on the street, and then a police officer stops you and you're scared for your life. Then the other ways you meet another black woman in the street, and she's excited about your haircut. The other time you're talking



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to this and you're like, oh, you're dark skinned, or no, you're light skinned. It's so many ways and it's dynamic. And behind being black, especially when you bring you know, either you're African or African American or Caribbean into the picture is it's a dynamic word and dynamic way of being that I think is exciting. It's thrilling. It's nerve wracking. It's It's amazing, for lack of a better word, but it's also something I'm learning. I'm learning because I don't I never claimed to be black, right? Because I didn't know I just thought I was Nigerian and and so now I'm learning what it is to be black. I don't I've learned that there's actually not one thing. It's just I think it's an interesting word that I'm still learning about for sure. That's the only way to put it. So I'm feeling I think I'm picking that bubble alone. Learning who I am and how I fit into the equation of blackness. And then we can talk all day about Beyonce, Black is king. We can have that conversation like Girl what you think about this girl? Where do I start? But yeah, dynamic. I think that's, that's where I'm going to leave it at.

BLK IRL 34:13

I do appreciate you bringing up the diasporic perspective of being black, because one thing I want to do in my research, even though I'm focused on black content creators in the United States, I have, I do bear in mind that it's not just African American type of black, right. It's also black from the Caribbean, black from Africa, black from anywhere in the world.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 34:34

And think about it because I realized a lot of amazing black women I follow black content creators typically are Nigerian either they're Nigerian immigrants or they're African Americans in some ways, different country, or they may be African Americans from different countries. I remember like the I never thought of them as Nigerian content creators and just thought of them as black youtubers. I'm thinking of Patricia Bright, I think Jayla Koriyan. You know, Ashley, so many, Missy Lynn. And I think, you know, like Jackie, and all these amazing people doing this, of course, Sophiology. And in many ways, I just, I never thought of them as, you know, different type of bloggers, I thought they were all black. Right. But when you break it down there are certain, I'm realizing that there's certain, there's certain ways that you see them as black women, because maybe the way they talk the way they act, versus folks who, you know, my [...] Dimma Umeh is an incredible, she's an amazing Youtuber. She's incredible. And the content is amazing. But she caters to a Nigerian audience, because she's in Nigeria, but like, and that's something I'm also struggling with now. It's like, I cater to a Nigerian audience because I am very, I have an American accent, sometimes. And I put it on because it was easier to talk in this country this way.



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BLK IRL 35:49

That's a performance.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 35:50

No, that's the thing though. Like this. That's how I've had to learn to talk in America period since I came here, right, but also wants to assimilate into the culture. So I was like, You know what, I'm gonna do this. But then when I post content, everybody knows I'm just I speak like, No, I'm like, Okay, let me just , I break into Yoruba. I'm talking, because I'm more comfortable that way. You know what I mean? I think I think it takes, it takes. It's interesting, because it takes it takes a lot to sort of learn where you fit in, if you want to fit in at all that I think I'm right now honestly, and this is the first time I'm actually saying that I'm actually just, I'm existing now. I'm going to see what where in the world that I need to be and I'm just going to post content to post content and I'm just hoping the right audience comes to me regardless of what they are, where they're from, you know.

BLK IRL 36:42

That was my interview with Sofi, also known as The Odditty. You may be wondering why we didn't address the current end SARS protests in our conversation, given the fact that Sofi and I are both Nigerian. This is because our interview was recorded months ago. It was recorded so long ago that Sofi has secured a full time job in international development since we last spoke, which she talks more about in her latest YouTube video from October 25, titled "Life Update." That said, I will provide some background on the protest for those of you who may be unfamiliar with this current event. Along with today's takeaways. Remember each episode, I will include citations to reference materials I mentioned, as well as some additional background reading for you on the black in real life website. Visit www.blkirl.com to nerd out. Haitian scholar, Antenor Firmin once said, "man, is programmed for social life, which he ultimately always achieves by making his own history." I believe that language is one tool that people use to construct their own histories. So I would like to focus my takeaways today on Sofi's use of language as a content creator which she talked candidly about at the end of our conversation. In his book "Decolonizing the Mind: The politics of language in African literature," Kenyan scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes all languages as both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. To Ngũgĩ living languages grow like living things. Take English for example, there are many ways to speak English. Sofi's language use represents what linguistic anthropologist Christine Jordan calls enlanguagement, which she defines as the process by which socio cultural groups create for themselves the language that becomes the medium of their new cultural life. The way Sofi talks is a medium of her cultural life as a Nigerian woman



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who lives and works in the United States. One of the three aspects of language as culture outlined by Ngũgĩ is that language as culture is an image forming agent upon which our whole conception of ourselves as a people, individually and collectively, is based. Sofi's use of language reflects the multiple cultures that she represents, which I believe is important to recognize in the context of her work as a black digital content creator because as linguistic anthropologist Krystal Smalls writes in her article "Languages of Liberation: digital discourse of emphatic blackness," when examining examples of stigmatized black language in digital discourse, we must consider the ways digital space is always already a white public space. Sofi's language hybridity within the influencer marketing sphere, which generally privileges quote unquote Standard English speakers is what makes her The Odditty in the best way possible. The late and great Nigerian musician and activist Fela Kuti released an album called "Zombie" in 1977. The lyrics of the album's titular track "Zombie" speaks to many of the same issues that citizens of Nigeria are still struggling with today. It criticizes the Nigerian military using the metaphor of the zombie to depict its soldiers as will less humans who follow orders without thinking and who move and act like zombies. This song and the album as a whole is unabashedly an anti-government proclamation, which obviously infuriated the Nigerian government while enthraling the Nigerian people. And another song on the album called "Mr. Follow Follow" Kuti sings in pidgin English "some dey follow follow them close their mouth," which is to say some people follow the status quo without speaking up and making their voices heard. Kuti goes on later in a chorus to advise if you de follow follow make you open, I open air open mouth open sense. In other words, don't be a mindless zombie, seek to learn about the world around you and to ask questions about it. This advice is just as important now in 2020, as it was back then, in 1977, as young Nigerians seek to shake up the status quo of police brutality in the country today, this leads me to the current hashtag and Sarge protests SARS is an acronym for the special anti-robbery squad and elite police force that has done everything but serve and protect the people of Nigeria members of SARS have been involved in everything from citizen harassment to kidnappings for years and this generation of young Nigerians are sick of it. As a result they have enacted what Yinka Adegoke A, the Africa editor of quartz cites as the biggest and longest run and series of national protests in a generation you may have seen the hashtags on social media hashtag and SARS hashtag and SARS Now similarly to the movement for Black Lives started in the United States. Nigeria's movement to end SARS has become more than just about police brutality, it has become a movement to shake up the status quo of Nigeria's weak governance and imagine if more positive future for our citizens of a country that is predicted to become the world's third most populous nation by 2050. To learn more about the END SARS movement, visit w w w dot end sars dot com. You have just listened to a production of the Black in Real Life podcast hosted by Anuli Akanegbu. Developed by Anuli



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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.