



SEASON 1, EPISODE 6: THE MEMEIFICATION OF BLACK WOMEN

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

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.]

I have been looking forward to releasing this episode for quite some time. Since I started working on this podcast project over the summer, I knew that I wanted to dedicate an episode to talking about the memefication of black women and girls. I was inspired in part by the deaths of Breonna Taylor and Oluwatoyin Salau who became more celebrated in death than they were in life. Unfortunately, the attempts to celebrate the lives of these women became overshadowed by attempts to commodify them as cultural artifacts. As memes. If you search for Breonna Taylor's name on a popular shopping platform Etsy, you will be welcomed to a page of over 6000 results with ads encouraging you to buy everything from face masks to holiday ornaments with her name or likeness on them. It's safe to say that the proceeds from most of these items will not be going towards supporting her loved ones. Time and time again, it seems that efforts to quote unquote protect black women can result in neglecting to see the human in them, in us. With this in mind. I knew that I wanted to talk to a scholar about this. And DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY was the first person I thought about. Dr. Aria S Halliday is an assistant professor in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies and program in African American and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Halliday specializes in cultural constructions of black girlhood and womanhood in material, visual and digital culture in the 20th and 21st centuries. Her interdisciplinary interests include sexuality, black feminism, and radicalism and black popular culture in the United States and the Caribbean. She is the editor of The Black Girlhood Studies collection, published by Women's Press in 2019, and a co-editor of a special issue on hip hop feminism in the Journal of Hip Hop studies, which was published earlier this year. 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, the subjects that were brought up in the interview portion. For every episode, I will include citations to the weapons materials I mentioned, as well as some additional background we'd in for you on a black in real life website. Visit w w w dot blk irl.com. To nerd out now, without further ado, let's get into my conversation with Dr. Arya S Halliday. From the murder of



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Breonna Taylor and the shooting of Megan Thee Stallion violence against black woman has been the topic of serious online conversation and much less serious memes. How do you think that the adoption of meme and stan language has enhanced public discourse? Or how has it also limited our collective conversations around traumatic events or serious issues?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 04:00

I think that in many instances, a lot of us try to find the best ways to cope. Right. And I think that means and I kind of like shorthand means as a kind of shorthand for the way you might respond to something becomes a stand in for actual emotional connection or response. And so I think on social media in particular, but I think even more in interpersonal conversations means in this kind of like Stan culture, or whatever it stands in for, like, you know, what you might think more thoroughly about a particular thing because you have a shorthand kind of response, you can pull it up, a lot of people keep, you know, they have a meme folder on their phones. And so it's something clicked that you can go to that can stand in for, you know, maybe a more dedicated and more in depth response to something right, this this kind of image can stand in for how you really think. And I think that in many ways, it has expanded the ways that we can communicate with each other, right? A lot of people use names, or gifts or gifts or whatever you want to say it in a way that adds to what they want to say or adds to what they've already talked about. But a lot of people also use it as a way to stand in. And so I think that, particularly when we're talking about death and trauma of black women in particular, right, we are asking people to identify with or, you know, enhance their emotional capacity to understand what it means to be, you know, one of the most marginalized groups in the US one of the most demonized groups in the US, and that's a lot of work for a lot of people to do. And so they use means to stand in for, you know, whatever emotional connection they think they should have. And then, you know, the newest ones, where they're like, you know, you know, I had a breakfast sandwich this morning, and right after that, you know, I hope we can arrest it, whatever the correspondences between whatever they did, or whatever their original part of the meme is, and may add this kind of, you know, arrest of cops and kill kick, Briana Taylor kind of stuff. And I think that, you know, people think, especially in a, an image driven culture that, you know, you're swiping, or you're scrolling through or whatever, and you're going to see something that's like, Oh, that's a cute, funny thing. And then you see something that's jarring, right? Like, you know, a recipe on the tailor or, you know, however many shots to kill blah, blah, blah, right? Those kinds of ideas, I think, you know, rupture this sense of like, endless scrolling, right? Because it's the kind of kind of emotional attack, right, it stands in for this kind of moment that like, shakes you because you're like, Oh, snap. That's not what I thought this was about at all. And so people have been using it for a kind of shock factor.



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BLK IRL 06:38

What do you think about that argument, like using it to change up the algorithm or to shock you into paying attention?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 06:47

Yeah, I mean, I think that like, you know, memes and gifs like, that's part of their purpose, right? That like, the reason why the the most popular ones are usually based on something that's racist or horrific, right, like, so. And I mean, I've written about the fact that like, usually, when you're talking about black women, or something that's traumatic, you use black women to do that kind of work. And so I mean, on one side of it, I think it's, you know, very problematic to use black women, or to use something that's kind of innocuous, like I had breakfast this morning to like, stand in for this kind of really profound conversation that you want people to have. But on the other end, when especially you know, it's quarantined, people are just scroll kind of endlessly scrolling, or what I've seen calling dead scrolling, like people are just scrolling and they don't even know why like something like that could be jarring enough to connect them emotionally to something that they've been kind of numb from or not, but I think they're doing it. I don't I you know, I can't really speak to the impact or the intent, even of what people are why people are doing things like that. But I think I understand the purpose even though I may not choose that purpose myself.

BLK IRL 07:55

I also think about like, not only Breonna Taylor's death, but also the death of Oluwatoyin Salau who died this year. And she would have turned 20 on August 27, which happens to be the day after my 30th birthday. So she comes to mind. We're also both Nigerian and one thing I noticed was that there are so many like posthumous images that were made to iconize her after she died on social media and it's was very jarring because you're seeing all this love be poured into her like after she died, but she needed that support when she was alive. Like she has said it. I want to share with you this quote from an article in the Hood Communist just to get your thoughts on this. And the article is called, "On Breonna, Oluwatoyin and Posthumous Iconography of Murdered Black People." And it says, "In death, Breonna and Toyin are queens, they are angels, they are saints, they are cover girls and muses, they are regal and chic and beautiful. They are merchandise they are screensavers they are profitable. What is striking to you when you hear that?"

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 09:03



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I mean two things, right. One that they are kind of honorific, but they they're also profitable. Right? That the the same ideas of like why we might want to honor and appreciate and respect black women are the same ideas that might make them profitable, right, that might make somebody put them on a on the front of the magazine. And I think that what's disturbing what I think most people find disturbing about those kinds of things is that, you know, they what I saw someone say on Twitter was that like Brianna Taylor would have never been on the cover of a magazine when she was alive, right? And so that it's it's kind of a strange commodification of her death that she would have never had the opportunity to do in life. And so I think that, you know, when we are specifically talking about commodifying Black Death, specifically, specifically black women, you know, we're asking You know, a system that is created and benefits from our own dehumanization, right, we we have been commodities and all the ways that you can be a commodity, that, you know, we are pushing people or trying to remind them that like, oh Yo, this is a person, this is a human, we respect them as a human, but the systems that we are actively working against that kill us, right, if I can be short is our are the same systems that have always commodified us and so I don't think that we should be surprised or not to say that you can't, you know, have an emotional response that's negative to what's happening. But we can't be surprised that, you know, the United States was, which is in most Western cultures with, which are specifically built on both the labor and the reproductive work that black women have done for centuries, right. Like we can't expect them to all of a sudden care that we die, when, you know, the whole kind of field of gynecology, and j Marion Sims and you know, the father of gynecology, and all the stuff that they say he is right is built off of, you know, ripping apart black women who were supposed to be getting treatment for pregnancy or stillbirth, or whatever, right? Like, the very systems that we have the fields that we have the information that we have, do you want to talk about Henrietta Lacks, or Tuskegee syphilis study or any of these things. And I'm sure there are many of them that we don't even know the names of right, like everything that we know about the body, about commodities, about selling things about people, right, all of that comes from the humanization of black women. So I'm not surprised that somebody would put their faces on a magazine, and people would buy it, because that that is the that's arguably what they tell us our value is right, your value is only right to be used in this way.

BLK IRL 11:53

And I think that's a good point that you make that, essentially, all of these structures are made off the backs of black women, so many industries are made off the backs of black women. So now I'm thinking as a black woman, both of us, like how do we take that awareness and move about in the world? Right?



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DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 12:10

Yeah, that's a great question. I think, I think that, um, I tell people, and I've written about this, too, when I grew up. And you know, the early 90s, my mom never told us, like, we never sat down to have conversation about the cops, we never sat down to have a conversation about what it means to be a black woman and to like, walk around with keys or only Park under light structure. So you know, like, if somebody's trying to mess with you, or whatever, like, we didn't have those conversations, it was understood, it's in the water, right? Like part of just who you are, you get like, my hair means something. My body needs something. I'm always available to certain people. But like, that's part of the way that black girls especially grow up. And I think that, you know, what, what keeps us sane, I think is that, you know, knowing one, we're not alone, right? Like there are other black women who are also experiencing this, but like, this information is not new. And so, you know, part of why I'm a professor in the first place is because, you know, I found joy and sorrow and trauma and love in this in the stories of other black women, right, like black women who have come before me and studied and thought about what it means to be a black woman what it means to exist with these structures, that's not going anywhere, right? Like, what it means to deal with these things people have written about for ages, right? Like Audrey Lorde has been talking about this stuff, right? When she was alive. And when she passed, right? There are people from, you know, the continent, for example, there are people from Europe, there are people from the US from Canada, from South America who have been writing about talking about these different things. And I think, you know, what grounds me I think every day is that like, there's somebody else to turn to like even when it feels like it's the craziest most ridiculous situation that I have been in. Right someone else has written about this someone else has theorizes someone else's has really like plotted through and thought about how ridiculous it is that we still have to deal with this. But also how we continue to move on from it and I think like that's what I get energized by that's why I continue to wake up every day and decide like okay, you know, being a black woman is the best thing that there is in the world even as right people have all this stuff to say.

BLK IRL 14:10

It was a particularly great moment to be a black woman this weekend when "Girlfriends" was released on Netflix. I don't know if you had a chance to catch up I personally had caught up on the whole series last year my friend gifted me the boxset for my birthday so I was I had already been rewatching it. I wanted to get your thoughts about it because you do work in the realm of like media representation of like black womanhood and black girlhoods. And I think this is a great example to talk through a show like "Girlfriends." How do you think "Girlfriends"



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contributes to the representation of black women's lives on screen and why do you think it still resonates with people now? 20 years since it first premiered?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 14:48

Right? I think that's a great question. One, I've been watching "Moesha" so.

BLK IRL 14:53

Oh, let's talk about "Moesha."

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 14:56

Haven't gotten to "Girlfriends" yet. It's on the list. Cuz, you know, they just, they're releasing all of them in this month. So I've been trying to catch up on Moesha and deal with, you know, whatever's happening in that show. But I think, Moesha, Girlfriend's Sister Sister, a lot of these, like 90 shows early 2000 shows that they're releasing, I think one pushes us to engage, you know, who we were at the time, right? Like, when Moesha, you know, premiered in 1997. Like, I was six, right? So, there are certain ways to like, think about like, what am I seeing and viewing what ideas are being put out for black girls for black women at the time, but also, I think they continue to resonate, because we still have those same conversations, we still have those same questions, a show like Girlfriends, which is like, you know, not too different than something like Insecure, right? The kind of, or even if you want to go back further Living Single, right, it's a very kind of resonant idea that you have black girlfriends who are trying to go through life together and navigate what those relationships require of them. And so I think that, you know, Girlfriends is going to continue to resonate. Living Single is going to continue, continue to resonate. Moesha and other shows will continue to resonate in the way that Insecure and other shows do. Because you know, those same conversations about you know, dating outside your race, or what does it mean to deal with a black man? You know, what kind of job do I want? Where do I want to live? But you know, how do I want to wear my hair, all those kind of conversations that happen across those shows, you know, happen in real life happen in conversations that you have with your mother, your girlfriends, or whoever, and so they continue to resonate because you're like, maybe I could have dealt with that conversation differently. Or if I was presented with this option, you know, how would I have maybe manifested that differently? You know, like, I think about living single and contentious character with Scooter how they were going back and forth for ages, right? Like, I know, chicks, who are who are Khadija? Right? Trying to like live their own life, but also they have this dude that they're like, do I continue to try to deal with this? Do I stop? Do I not, right? And I think that they resonate because they're stories that we continue continue to identify with. But I



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think also, you know, thinking through a 2020 lens, we can see all the ways that they were problematic. And you know, someone was saying recently to me that like, they watched Moesha, and those first couple of episodes, probably the first three or four have like all these kind of fat phobic jokes about Kim and Kim's character, and like, why somebody would want her, why they wouldn't want her. But I think that like, you know, in 2020, we can say, Oh, that's so rude that somebody was saying that, but like, as a chunky black girl in 1996, people definitely said those things, right? And so I think that, like, you know, it's, it's a window into who we were at the time as a, as a country as a community as a kind of black diasporic conversation and how we change, right? I think that, and there are a lot of ways that we're the same. And that, you know, there's a lot of attention to like heterosexuality and all these kinds of things, and like what black men want, and against the culture, and cars, and all of that. But there's a lot of stuff that's different that like, Insecure, hopefully, right tries to pick up and do something differently with and so I think if you compare those right shows and kind of think through them over time, and like where we are as a community, I mean, community in the broad sense that like the black community, right, but where we are as a community and how we grow intellectually, like, you know, there's some huge changes between who we were in 1995 and 2020. And I think that is huge. When we talk about, you know, really understanding what it means, you know, black, blackness is not a monolith. And how representation has to be expansive, like, you know, I was just watching Lovecraft Country, right. And so what it means for a particular, you know, black main character like Montrose to be queer, and all the ways we might put queer in quotes, right? In 2020, I'm not sure that we would have been watching or even interested in that, and 1990, right, even if, though, are people who we know who live and experience life that way, that doesn't necessarily mean it would have been on television, like, not in the way that Moesha or Sister Sister or something like that was. And so I think that, you know, to me, it just speaks about, like, how different life is now how much more expansive, how much more growth, right, we've been through, in terms of, you know, what we appreciate on television, the stories that we love, the stories that we identify with, but also how much further we have to go right, I hope in 2020 You know, we're having particular conversations about trans women and the murder of black women and children and that kind of thing, but, you know, hopefully in 2040 we're talking about something else right. Hopefully, that's what will happen.

BLK IRL 19:42

I want to pull apart a few pieces from your your commentary there first, the very serious question of because you said you know some women who are Khadijas. Which Living Single character would you describe yourself as?



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DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 19:57

Oh, that is dangerous. Um, I don't know, I always identified very closely with Maxine Shaw, right?

BLK IRL 20:05

Attorney at law.

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 20:06

Oh, yeah. But I think in real life, I'm probably a mix of Khadija and Maxine. Only in that, you know, I think I'm much more connected to an interested in a kind of communal sense that I think Khadija was always attuned to, she was always thinking about, like, you know, what are we doing together? Or how do I help somebody or whatever. I also, you know, love having multiple romantic relationships that once I was very good at.

BLK IRL 20:35

She always had a fine man on her.

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 20:36

Right! I mean, she always and Max too, they always were busy, I will put it like that they're always busy with with multiple friends, which I loved. But they Oh, like Max was always invested in like, eating well, and having a good laugh. And I love that. I would definitely say I'm probably a mix of those two. And I mean, I'm kind of an intense person, Max, Max is quite intense. So I identify with that.

BLK IRL 21:04

And you said, even watching Moesha. And I'm wondering, because you also mentioned some of the commentary that people have been making since rewatching it, how has it been to be watched Moesha for you now, as an adult?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 21:17

Well, I think it's hard because I'm watching, you know, kind of through childhood nostalgia, right, like remembering it, and Brandy, but also, I study, you know, what it means to see black girls on screen. So I'm watching it through kind of two lenses one, what it means to like, experience it myself, but also what it means to watch these kind of things and 2020 or 1996. And I think that um, what is dope, this show is so cute. Like, I think that I was I can immediately connected with you know, I remember the song that you know, that theme song. And, you



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know, the the kind of family dynamic they've created. And Kim wanted to be a cheerleader. I never want to be a cheerleader. But I had a friend who tried to force me to try out for basketball. And I was a problem. But I was there for her. Right, like, so there are so many stories that like I remember that made up, you know, middle school and high school that so much representative some of what the show talks about. So I enjoy it for that reason, right. But the other part of me is like I think, you know, so often people want to read things in their evolved brain, right? Like everybody's woke now. So they're watching the show through this kind of, Oh, well, it should have done this. And it's like, Okay, well, in 1996, nobody was talking about that in the same ways, right? So you can't expect the show who that's on, you know, WB or UPN, or whatever it was to really do something that, you know, we know, we're only really seeing on like HBO now. And the only reason we go see it on HBO is people can, you know, stream it. Back in the day, you can pay for HBO. It's crazy. Yeah.

BLK IRL 22:52

And I wonder because you, you just mentioned like, when you watch shows, you're you're not just doing as like a regular, you know, consumer reviewer, or you're also a scholar, and as someone who like studies, popular culture and also consumes in that personal time, do you feel overwhelmed with like, everything you watch? Like, oh, I could write a paper about that, like, Oh, no, like, do you ever actually just get to watch without critical lens, or is a critical lens still important to you when you view things,

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 23:19

The critical lens is always there. And I think that, you know, to be honest, it was always there before I got a degree, right that some of some of what you get. And I tell my students this all the time, because they're like, Oh my god, you've ruined the show for me, and I can never watch it. Because I see all the things that you're talking about. And I'm like, okay, but you should see those things, right. The reason that we don't see them, is because we live in a system that tells us it's important to ignore it, right. But then you learn, you know, through proximity to people through other experiences through school, you get language, right to really understand and interpret what's happening. And so I would say that it's always been there, I just have better language. And I'm kind of more adept to, like, understand what's happening in the context of it. There are of course, things that I'm able to watch with, with, perhaps less critically, I don't know if it's, you know, not at all, but it's maybe less so. But usually, I'm watching something like project power, for example, in the film of Jamie Foxx, that's on Netflix right now. And you know, I'm not thinking anything that's necessarily academic. I'm like, Okay, we got to watch an extra show. Some people gonna get shot and killed, like, whatever. And



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then there's this see what a black girl that I'm like, Oh, no, what do they do what's on a black girl? And all of a sudden, there's something that I need to think through, right? And so I think that sometimes I have this kind of, like, jarring kind of critical moment where I'm not necessarily trying to, like engage in the super critical way. But there's something there's an undercurrent of something, there's something misogynist that happens or somebody who's racist that happens and I'm like, hold on, did they just say what I thought they just said, Hold on, wait a second rewind, we need to replay this. Um, and I think that that definitely shifts the way that I understand what's being read or what's happening on screen.

BLK IRL 25:00

I want to now pivot our conversation to a presentation that you did last year called the "Afrofutures of Feminism: Young, Gifted and Black." I watched it. And it was during an open forum at Plymouth State University. And I want to first ask you like this the most basic questions just from the title, because I hear the word Afro futurism a lot and maybe some listeners may not even know what that is, but they hear it too. What does it mean to be an afro futurist? What is afrofuturism?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 25:35

That's a great question. Um, so afrofuturism comes out of a particular kind of fantasy, science fiction kind of conversation. So there are people like Octavia Butler, who get thrown in a lot in terms of conversations about afrofuturism, there's music, I'm sorry, my brain is like trying to add all the people together, like how do I give you the shorthand, but basically, it's thinking about, you know, what are the other possibilities, other worldly or not? Right for black people? And I think that, or through the, through the eyes of a black person, I should, I shouldn't say that. It's always about black people. But I think Afrofuturism maybe use Octavia Butler, for example, she's always thinking about, you know, the next world or, you know, vampires or fantasy or science or technology, right? It has this kind of idea about what it means for black people to experience the world differently, right. So thinking about futures, is not necessarily about like, you know, post 2020. But it's about thinking beyond the present moment, specifically for black folk, that would be my shorthand.

BLK IRL 26:42

And I want to pull up one thing you said in in that presentation, you said a lot of times we think of the future as something separate from ourselves. But the future is happening now. And the future is what we hope, what we hope to embrace as the work that we do today. You said this last year, what does that mean to you today?



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DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 27:02

I never go back and listen to anything. I'm like ooh, I said that? I'm smart? Um, okay. So I think what I meant at the time was that, you know, I think a lot of times when we're talking about racial justice, or how, you know, how do we experience the world differently, or better, right, we think it always has to be like future, right? It has to be in some time, while I'm, you know, more established or a more an adult, I have more money, I have more whatever. And I think, particularly when I was talking, those are in the context of college students. But when you're talking to people in a present moment, you have they have to understand that like, an Angela, this is Angela Davis, it's not even, you know, Aria Halliday being special or speaking deeper or anything, but like, Angela Davis will say like, it takes this particular moment right now, where you decide to do something differently than what you've done before. Right. And I think that, you know, for for folks in May of this year, for example, who are like, you know, I maybe have never marched before, but, but today, I'm going to march because I want a different result than what we have, right? That is one, you know, kind of one individual choice, that makes a lasting impression, not only on the other people that you're interacting with, but on the world. And so I think that, you know, when we're talking about, like, futures, or futurism and what that might mean, it means that, like you are creating the future right now, and the choices that you make, and the people that you interact with, I mean, the food that you eat, right, you're creating, you know, your tomorrow by what you do today, you're creating next week, you're creating next month, next year, about what you do right now. And I think that, like I said, That's not like a special tenant of something that I said, but I think that's really the way that the black woman radicals that I love and appreciate the black woman progressives that I follow, right? That that's the kind of work that they're committed to right? Like, it may not make sense right now, because you're trying to figure out how to how to even do it. But in a year from now, the system is going to be created, it's going to be set up, it's going to be smooth, but you got to start somewhere.

BLK IRL 28:59

What can we, the collective we, in this case, do to promote black feminist scholarship and the scholars that you talk of and this work that they do?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 29:09

If they you know, as a professor, people will be so mad at this answer. I'm like, first of all, you need to read. I think so many folks expect like a SparkNotes kind of response to racial justice to blackness to like, understand what's going on in our world, you want something that's quick



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and easy that you can, you know, digest in, you know, two minutes or something like that. And that's just not what that's not how to work the way that the world works. But also that's not the way that like, changing who you are, and the world that you live in is gonna work at all right, but I think that I mean, if you want to know more about, you know, Afrofuturism gopika, you know, Nitasha womex, but you know, a book about Afrofuturism. Or you can pick up Angela Davis, or you can pick up Audrey Lorde or Octavia Butler that are already named or there's so many, you know, even in a present sense, right? There are books coming out almost every day by black woman writers that will give you some of that understanding of Afrofuturism but also a black feminist scholarship. So y'all mean, Mikki Kendall has a book called "Hood Feminism" that came in to me. You know, Britney Cooper's "Eloquent Rage" does a great job. Tressie McMillan Cotton has "Thick" that came out. I mean, there's so much right? I mean, we go to a shelf and just buy the whole shelf. But I think also, you know, so I don't mean just buy the books. Yes, buy them, but also read them. Because there are people out here buying books that never read them. So.

BLK IRL 30:37
For the shelfies.

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 30:39

Yeah, yeah, no, I mean, including myself. I got books on my shelf I need to read. But you know, so I would say one, you need to read two, I think, you know, getting a group with other people who are trying to have the same conversations, right. So there are a lot of people, especially right now who are connecting via Zoom and other means to you know, have book clubs, or they're my best friend. And I started a book club for like, how to build your friendship better, right, like, so I think there's, there's multiple groups that you can join. And literally, I think it's called Bookclubz with a Z dot com. You can create your own book could you know, tell people when you meet when you're gonna talk, and really have a conversation about what you're reading, so that it's not just you, you know, processing on your own, which can be great, but you're processing a community, which I think is what's required, right, to really change the way that we understand ourselves and the world around us. So read, talk to some other folk. And then I would say support organizations, right? So there are a lot of organizations, black feminist, and otherwise, who are doing really great work on the ground, whether that's Movement for Black Lives, or there's something else right there a lot of mutual aid organizations you can support in your local community, you know, even if it's, you know, \$3 a month or \$5 a month or \$10 a month, right? You know, right now, I'm a subscriber for Bitch Media, which is, you know, one of the only, you know, still surviving independent, feminist media organizations, and they



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do a quarterly magazine, and it's \$8 a month, I'm not even doing nothing crazy, right. But I think that, you know, committing to a particular group of organizations, let's say, like, I want to, I'm doing something for, you know, the alumni organization from the universities that I attended, I'm doing something for rich media, I'm doing something, right. So there are multiple ways that you might contribute, you know, time, energy, money, and passion. But I think that, you know, so many people are like, well, I don't know what to do. So I'm not going to do anything, I think, you know, doing those three things, right, like readings, reading, you know, talking in conversation with other people, and supporting organizations, whether that's time or money or whatever, like, those three things will change the world instantaneously.

MUSIC ("Wild" by Garth.) 32:43

And I also want to ask in that lens, who should people follow that you think is doing a good job at just being black? Just being a woman in the world? Like, who do you recommend?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 32:56

Who are the people who are doing great, just being black? You know, um, I have a friend from graduate school. Chelsea Frazier, one, I think, she has a page called Ask an Amazon, on Twitter and Instagram, that you can she does work around black feminist scholarship about environmentalism, they get questions about, like, why California is on fire right now. Like, check, you know, check out Chelsea and her work and really understand like, what the context is, and what that has to do with racism, with white supremacy with feminism, right? All these things are related. And I think she does a really great job of, you know, being unapologetic, unapologetically black herself, right. But also, like, you know, pushing people to engage not only their experiences, but how they connect to all the other ones. She's really fabulous. I mean, I think it's ridiculous to say, follow me, because I don't think I'm doing anything that particularly great.

MUSIC ("Wild" by Garth.) 33:49

You better big up yourself, you're existing as a black woman and scholar in academia.

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 33:55

I'm out here, but the only reason I would say follow me is because I spend most of my time on Twitter, promoting other people, right, like, I spent, like most of my Twitter, about jobs, about opportunities about organizations.

BLK IRL 34:09



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And what's your handle for the people?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 34:12

At Dr. Aria Halliday. Yeah, I mean, most of the work that I do is, is promoting other people. I mean, sometimes I'm out here doing crazy stuff, or, you know, I'm, I'm creating debates on social media, which is a bad idea. But I think most of the time, it's about, you know, I'm interested in getting this money, right. I'm promoting jobs and promote opportunities. I'm promoting, you know, organizations to support on promoting books to buy, right. I mean, almost every day, I'm like, go buy this book is dope. So I think like, if you want to do those three things that I mentioned that, you know, in the last question, like, you know, you can follow me and find those people, you can decide after you find those people, you don't need to follow me anymore. And that's totally fine. You know, because I believe in my heart of hearts, like I'm a connector, it's not about me, it's about how do I get you to the next thing that's gonna help you and so You know, follow me for 30 days to see if you get what you need. And if you do great if you don't great, like, you know that there are multiple ways to get there, but I think I mean, I think Twitter in particular has a feature where you can just like, look up specific phrases like, look up those phrases and see who's talking about who's let's talk about Afrofuturism on Twitter and follow, you know, follow people who are doing that work. Follow authors who are doing, you know, the reading of the stuff that you're reading, or whatever, like, there are people who are doing really dope stuff. But I think sometimes when you don't know where to start, you're confused. But like, start from what you know. But then you know, where you want to expand. If I want to know more about environmental racism, let me see who's writing about that. If I want to know more about, you know, in college, I was really interested in mountain removal. I didn't even know that was a thing, right there. Like there are literally people who are blowing up pieces of mountains and moving them. I didn't know that. It's Appalachia, right? in Appalachia, right. It's a whole thing and literally destroys communities destroys lungs, I mean, kills kids and all kinds of crazy stuff, right? But they're trying to get called. So they blow up part of the mountain. Right? And I watched the documentary about it. And so I follow people who's who write about that, because I want to know what's happening was not removed in Appalachia. You know, any of those things. I'm interested in what's happening on Native reservations. So I follow a couple of, you know, activists who are doing stuff on Native on Native Americans. I'm interested in what's happening in Hawaii, and, you know, indigenous communities. I follow some of those. I'm interested in what's happening with K-pop in Korea, so I'm following people who are doing that. I think like, you know, you're never going to get everything. But I think it's important to think expansively about, you know, where do you get your information from? And you know, Twitter is a great place to kind of like, co lay all those



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things into one place is put all those things in one place and say, Okay, I kind of have a handle on this thing. Let me go follow three other people .

BLK IRL 36:57

That was my interview with Dr. Aria S Halliday. While Dr. Halliday and I covered a lot of topics in our conversation I would like to focus today's takeaways on highlighting Dr. Halliday's research. Not only do I find her work to be so necessary to read, but I also believe it is important to support black women by citing black woman. Shout out to Christen A Smith and the hashtag "cite black women" movement. In 2018, Dr. Halliday published a paper for the *Girlhood Studies Interdisciplinary Journal* called, "Miley What's Good: Nicki Minaj's Anaconda, Instagram Reproductions and Viral Memetic Violence." In this paper, she writes about how the bodies, aesthetics, and experiences of black women are vilified for survival enjoyment by using the creation of means to appropriated the artwork from Nicki Minaj is single Anaconda as evidence to support her claim. Dr. Halliday introduces the term image economy to describe the ways that global conversations and attitudes towards popular ideas are fueled by the constant sharing of images digitally on social media sites. She goes on to apply this term to the process of viral reification as it relates to black girls and women. Viral reification is a two part phenomenon that involves the intertrade processes of commodification and objectification. commodification in this context is when demonizing ideas and concepts about black girls and women are recycled in digital spaces. objectification in this context, is when black girls and women are denied humanity in these recycled racist and misogynist images. Through this viral reification process, black girls and women are made into objects that are then sold. While Dr. Halliday goes on to examine the digital beheading of Nicki Minaj's Anaconda single art and Miley Cyrus's role in it to demonstrate how the bodies of black girls and women are subject to symbolic depth on digital platforms. She also discusses how digital representations of black woman directly influenced the ways that they are treated beyond social media here, She cites the experiences of women like Charnesia Corley, Renisha McBride, Sandra Bland, and Nia Wilson. Say her name. Charnesia Corley, Renisha McBride, Sandra Bland, Nia Wilson. Black women who were subjected to violence for simply existing, quite literal deaths. This article was written before the murders of Breonna Taylor and Oluwatoyin Salau. And many other woman, cis and trans women collectively, who have been subjected to violence for simply existing. But the issues overall since this piece was published that Dr. Halliday highlight, they remain pressing, they remain relevant. I want to turn now to talk a bit about one of Dr. Halliday's most recent projects, a special issue of the *Journal of Hip Hop studies* released in July 2020 that highlights the particular oppressions faced by black women who are hip hop feminists and the ways that they thrive in spite of it. In this issue that Dr. Halliday co-edited with Dr. Ashley N. Payne of Missouri



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State University, the editors lay out what they called the 21st century B.I.T.C.H. frameworks. These frameworks were created to provide a more nuanced definition of hip hop feminism that opens a conversation of hip hop feminism to all women from the ratchet women to the classy women to the hood feminists and to all women, femmes, and girls who as they write in their introduction continuously represent and reconstruct black girl slash woman hood. The issue traces the genealogy of the scholarship on hip hop feminism, and its relationship with second wave black feminism while positioning hip hop feminism as a liberatory framework and epistemology that rests at the center of conversation surrounding sexual pleasure and identity. As a scholar, Dr. Halliday produces work that centers and celebrates black girls and women while also challenges the various racist and misogynist stereotypes that result in their oppression, both online and offline. You have just listened to a production of the Black in Real Life Podcast hosted by Anuli Akanegbu developed by Anuli Akanegbu script 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.