



SEASON 1, EPISODE 9: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BLACK

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

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 00:23

I am Anuli Akanegbu, and you are listening to the Black in Real Life Podcast. This is the last episode of the first season of The Black in Real Life Podcast. Thank you so much to everyone who has listened to this podcast. Thank you so much to my guests who participated in conversations with me. What I want to do for today's episode, the final episode of season one is to give my guests the last word. Now usually in the past seven episodes, there are nine total including this one. But the past seven episodes, I usually had the last word, I would finish the interviews or conversations with my guests. And then I would share some comments, some takeaways, some scholarship, some knowledge with you all that I'm learning because really this project is me sharing what I'm learning as I learned it as a form of public scholarship. But what I want to do today is a little different because I want my guests to have the last word. So there will be no takeaways no comments for me aside from what I'm saying now. And what I'm going to do today is to reveal that at the end of each episode, and each conversation, I had asked every guest the same question, but I did not share answers to this question on their episodes because I was holding, I was holding back and wanting to compile all of their responses to this one question for a special episode, this episode that you are listening to right now. So for the first time ever, you will hear all of the guests answer the very same question in one episode. And that question is, what does it mean to you to be black? It is a simple question, yet very difficult. But important. It is a question that has a lot of layers. And the reason why I'm asking this question is because everybody has their own interpretation of what it means to be black. And this is because blackness or to be black is not to be a part of a monolithic identity or monolithic community. Everyone experiences it and interprets it in their own way. So I think putting their answers together, all seven, they have their answers together back to back, you will hear the different ways that people approach this one question. Because ultimately, at the end of the day, the back end real life podcast is about showcasing the expansiveness of black identity within internet culture. And I think this question really speaks to that truth. So what the last time without further ado, let's get into my conversations with all of my guests as they



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answer in order of their parents on the podcast as they answer, what does it mean to them to be black? I like to end each conversation with this question, because I think it really speaks to the intention behind lack in real life, which is the the people you follow online are also black in real life. What does it mean to you to be a black person white now? Just in general, this year, this month? This day, right?

SHAMIRA IBRAHIM 03:48

Oh, what it means to me to be a black person right now is just to be intentional about my existence, and about the work that I do. It's hard for a lot of us in a lot of communities and a lot of our networks and neighborhoods, I am blessed in a lot of ways, you know, for a lot of the opportunities I've had recently, and I'm very thankful for that. So the least I can do is be intentional about what I amplify what I say or the work I can do, where I can do it and what I can't uplift and communicate and express. So that's what I believe I can do to invest and give back into the spaces that I care about. And ensure that people understand that living as a black person means so many things, you know, it's something that I love deeply. It's joy. It's amazing. It's also exhausting. And it's also something that's fundamentally something that I cannot give up or put away at any point in my life right and I feel the need to share that and I feel like to invest in that and I feel the need to highlight how that colors so many different parts of our lifestyle and In our digital culture and artists day to day culture, and so that's what I try to do, I'm not always the greatest at it. Now, I'm still constantly learning. But that's kind of what I try to do at the core of any work I try to put out. And also just in my day to day life, you know, I am a black woman who live in Flatbush. So, you know, my life is black, on a daily basis.

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 05:26

You know, I always have felt that color doesn't define me, I am a citizen of the world. And that if I am, if I'm hungry enough, and that if I work hard enough, that I can achieve it. And so one every day, I'm inspired one just to be a woman, because I feel women are, are very, are very powerful. And, you know, I'm a very confident woman. And so I think, you know, just looking at all of the different movements that have kind of led to this, you look at like, just, you know, the women who rose up with me too, and then what's happening with Black Lives Matter, everyone, people are recognizing their power and, and the ability want to unite to use your voice and to use your platform to do good. And so I mean, I'm excited to, to try to in my little world, to try to offer some, some service to be able to, to inspire others to to help those students know that, you know, the sky's the limit to never to never take that know, if I told you how many people told me no. Or you would be like, Okay, wow, I'm Ted, you know, to never stop the to never to never stop chasing, everything is possible. No matter what you look like, or



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what size you are, or what you know, who you love, or I embrace all the change and all the disruption.

SALEAM SINGLETON 07:26

It means that, you know, I'm reminded that my existence is this a struggle, I don't mean to say it means it means that I have to have a whole new every day, I'm reconciling with who I am, as a black person. And as a black man, especially in a in a space that is created for white women, everything that I do, I have to have to think about the space that I'm taking up. And this and this is my entire life. So today, if I'm going to flip that around, you know what I'm gonna say that it means right now, I have an opportunity to really, while we have these people's ears set to show the fuck out and say everything that it is that I've always wanted to say, and to be great by being present. It's unfortunate that we had to lose so many of our brothers and sisters for these reactions to be occurring. But for those sacrifices, for me to be black means making those sacrifices worth in every single thing that we do. And it's not always going to be direct activism. I think that what I'm holding space, in this environment means a lot, because there are no black male beauty editors. And a lot of these places, there are no black women on staff there. There are no black female editors, and now is the time. And right now to be black means to have an opportunity not given to us. But an opportunity to be great. And to take everything that we've ever been asking for, that we should have never been asking for.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 09:01

That's a huge question, right? Because in many ways, I didn't know I was black diamonds in America, right? Because I've only been in America for 65 years. Oh, wow. Yeah. So interesting. But I think I would say to be dynamic. That's the I want to use that word, because I want to explain what that means. Because I love I want to say shaders because I'm 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 him here in America. Right? And so, I'm learning as I speak, that you're about a lot like I'm oftentimes like, I just break into your butt when I'm excited. And nearby whenever I'm training when listening and I've been getting feedback from brands and from managers that we've added to stress we've been a lot more English, we've, you know, you know, catering to a lot more a broader audience within the track. Lots of different people might. Oh, I didn't. I mean, no, I couldn't, you know, I could do that because they like so you speak as a black woman, 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



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something I'm also starting with the this dynamic because it's nuanced with with however you're doing but you're constantly having to change without be changed in terms of the adapting Some things are, life is thrown at you, right? One day, you're walking on the street, and then a police officer stops you scared for your life. That day, you meet another black man in the street, and she's excited about your haircut. The other time you're talking to this and you're like, oh, you're dark skinned. I know you're light skinned. It's so many ways, and this is dynamic, and behind being black, especially when you bring you know, either your African African American or Caribbean into the picture. There's, it's a dynamic word and dynamic way of being 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 gonna be [...] and and so now I'm learning what it is to be black. I don't I've learned that there actually is one thing is, I think it's an interesting word that I'm still learning about for sure. I hadn't told me where to put it. So I'm feeling I think I'm so stuck in that bubble alone. Learning who I am now I fit into the equation of blackness. And then we can talk all day about Beyonce, *Black is King*. Like always just be like, Girl, what do you think about that girl? Where do I stop? By but yeah, dynamic. I think that's, that's where I'm gonna leave it at.

BLK IRL 11:54

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 light. It's also black in the Caribbean, black from Africa, black clear anywhere in the world.

SOFIYAT IBRAHIM 12:15

Like, I realized, a lot of amazing black women I follow black content creators typically are Nigerian, either Nigerian immigrants or 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. Right. I think of Patricia Bray, I think Jayla curry yarn, you know, Ashley, and like you so many Missy Lin. And I think, you know, like, Jackie, and all these amazing people doing this for sociology. And in many ways, I just, I never thought of him as you know, different type of bloggers, but we're all black. Right? But when you break it down or assert, 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, might insert a demo. Oh, man, and his credit company's amazing. Yeah. She's incredible. And the content is amazing. But she cares the Nigerian audience,



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because she's in Nigeria. She's in Nigeria, but like, and that's something I'm also struggling with. No, it's like, I characterize an audience because I am very, I have an American accent, sometimes. And I put it off because it's just easier to talk in this country this way. I'd say that's a performance. No, that's what that's the thing though. Like this. That's how I've had to learn to talk. Yeah, America period since I came here, right, but also wanted to assimilate into the culture. So I was like, You know what, I'm gonna do this. But then when I put content, everybody knows, I'm just I speak like, No, I'm like, Okay, let me just think if I bring it to your robot, 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 and all that I think I'm right now honestly, and nothing was the first time actually saying that. I'm actually just existing, I'm gonna see what were the words that need to be and I'm just gonna post content, proposed content. And I'm just hoping the right audience comes to me, regardless of what they are, where they're from, you know? What does it mean to be a black person?

DR. ARIA S. HALLIDAY 14:22

I think it means finding joy in the most basic stuff. I think, you know, right now, we are inundated with information and images of black pain and black trauma and black death. And I think it's really easy to be that that the word dried up is in my head, like I always think about flowers and trees, right. And I think that like if there are too many weeds, or there's too much stuff around a tree can't grow properly, right. The roots try to grow out and there's things in its way so it dies off. And I think You know, things like joy and love. And you know, like straight up belly laughter right are things that like, hope your roots continue to grow out, they help obstruct all this other stuff that's in the way. And so I think even as you might be consuming some of these things that are really traumatic and problematic that, you know, you have to also balance it with some of these other things that are coming and continue to help you grow. That's what it means to be a black person right now finding balance in the ways that we consume, you know, general information about the world and being, you know, knowledgeable people, but also keeping your heart safe.

ANDREA LEWIS 15:37

Right now, honestly, I think it's stressful to be a black person right now. Because a lot is happening. Um, good and bad. And so it's a lot, it's a lot to process, it's a lot to have to deal with, like, I think about right now, like even just last night, you're watching Lovecraft country, and it's this whole period piece images you've never seen of yourself on screen. And it's exciting. And like, Whoa, I can't even believe that I needed this. And then at the same time,



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Jacob Blake, right, like, at the exact like you soon as you finish that episode, the next thing, right, and so you're like, you can't even celebrate what you just saw, because you're seeing something else that you don't really necessarily want to see. And then it's like I woke up this morning. And like, the cover of Vogue is a Briana Taylor and that like very beautiful portrait. But it's also like, I can't believe we have to like, this is happening in this. It's so it is a lot. It's like, constant constant constant. And I know like at the beginning of I'll sue COVID for the quarantine rather, a lot of people, my friends and myself included, you're getting text from all your non-black friends, say like, or family, anybody that's like, "Oh my god, I'm so sorry about everything that's goin on." And it's like, as as heartfelt. And genuine as that is. It's also like, you know, that's a lot. And I think that's why in 2020 there's an empowerment that's happening amongst black people. But there's also stress. And, and I think the commonality amongst us at least, that I try to do any meetings I have, especially with black creatives, we try our best to be like this. Everybody feel okay, everybody, all right, just before we even get into the work, because to think that on top of dealing with like our own daily stuff, just being human, then there's the stuff that's happening to black people all of the time, all over the world, then there's I also have to work I also have to create, I also have to keep going, like it's a lot of stuff. And so I think being a black person right now has a lot of beauty, but it also has a lot of pain.

DANIELLE PRESECOD 18:03

I mean, it's really, I guess, I'm not gonna say it's like really hard because of course, like, there are people like Angela Davis who is like bitch have not even gotten going yet. But I think it's a lot of exploring your own identity. And just like finding and establishing proper boundaries with people, and I mean, for me, it means like changing a lot of relationships I have and looking at like who I want to share my energy with and realizing that blackness is a gift and you have the ability to do with it what you want.

BLK IRL 18:55

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 God, who 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.