



SEASON 1, EPISODE 8: MORE THAN JUST YOUR TOKEN BLACK GIRL

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

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. Danielle Prescod is a 15-year veteran of the beauty and fashion industry. She has previously worked at InStyle, Moda Operandi, Teen Vogue, and most recently, she served as the style director at BET.com. She is a lifelong fashion obsessive, who spent her formative years in uniforms at prep school in Greenwich, Connecticut, and relishing the opportunity for self-expression and attention. That fashion provided. As an avid reader and writer Danielle primarily dedicates her time to research and how subjects like feminism and social justice intersect with pop culture. She has taken all that she has learned as well as her experiences in the beauty and fashion industry to start a consulting company, 2BG, with fellow beauty and fashion industry vet, Chrissy Rutherford. Also, it looks like congratulations are in order. In addition to her work as co-founder of 2BG consultant, it was also announced just last week that Danielle will be publishing a book about her life to date called token black girl. Follow Danielle on social media @DaniellePrescod. For more details about her book, and this episode, Danielle, and I talk about the beauty and fashion industry's reaction to last summer's racial uprising, how she creates boundaries in her online and offline lives, and her plans to leave New York City. 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 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. Just one note, one quick note about our conversation, you're going to hear some background sound because Danielle was talking to me at the time from her apartment in Manhattan and noise just comes with territory when you live in the city. Such is life. If you follow Danielle on Instagram, you'll see that her life has changed quite a bit since our conversation was recorded. So okay, without further ado, let's get into my conversation with DANIELLE PRESCOD. On May 31 you had a video on Instagram about



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performative allyship and I saw that personally it is getting a lot of shares over 2.5 million views, the last time I saw. Can you talk a little bit about what inspired you to post that video like what was the final straw that made you say, you know what, I need to say something about what's going on?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 03:45

Honestly, it had just been like a lot of observation over you know, Ahmaud Arbery's death happened and I just watched like so many people in my direct orbit essentially, like not not even respond but like just go about their lives as if their workouts and their, you know, breakfasts and whatever it is they were doing because at the time, we were all still pretty heavily in quarantine. Without like acknowledging or saying anything. It was so frustrating. And then like, of course after that it was like George Floyd's death, and more people began to pay attention. But to me, I'm like, Okay, so now you've just been shamed into posting. So there's a lot of people who posted just because of the fact that they, you know, thought they should or they saw everyone else do it. Yeah. And they were like, I will look a certain way if I don't, I'm not from really a place of like genuine concern or desire to express a sentiment about this man who was essentially murdered for the entire world to see. And, you know, I I'm someone who I work at a black Brit and media brand, I am constantly talking about racism in this industry. And I'm like dope, if you guys would have just simply addressed the racism in the realm with which you can, you wouldn't have to be booing over George Floyd, like who you don't know, I don't know, like, it's, of course terrible what happened to him. But at the same time, there are so many things that you could do in your own personal life, and so many steps that you could individually take, before we get to a place where someone is murdered, bad things that are happening to black people that you could actually stop. What do you think on that note?

BLK IRL 05:39

What do you think about afterwards, over the summer brands are posting all of these solidarity statements online? Were you at all optimistic about the statements leading to any kind of change?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 05:50

Um, to be honest, not really, because so much of like, what is required to actually make a difference is a financial investment. And frankly, brands are not in a position to do that right now. COVID has decimated businesses completely changed so many industries. And so like, they can say they're all in favor of things all they want. But like, if they're on a hiring freeze, they can't, they can't, you know, reasonably employ anybody, they can't make, like actual



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significant changes to their organization, which essentially would mean like to have more black voices and other people of color. In company,

BLK IRL 06:34

Do you feel like your your thoughts or approach to like social justice have evolved since working at BET compared to like, where you used to work before, which are more like predominantly white spaces?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 06:47

I would say. So I mean, simply because it has to, like the audience I serve is only black. So my concern is only for black people. And whereas like when I worked at other places, it was like my audience was a mainstream audience. So it was more serving all women. And so there was a desire for me to integrate black people and people of color into content that I was doing when I worked into mainstream brands, but like, I wasn't just serving them. So anything that I do, at BET has to reflect the black community positively.

BLK IRL 07:27

One thing I appreciate, appreciate about following you online is how refreshingly honest you can be. And there was another Instagram post you shared on August 27. And you talked about the pressure that you felt after initially going viral to say the right thing online? Can you talk about or if you're comfortable? Can you talk about where that pressure came from? To feel like you have to say the right thing online?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 07:52

Well, I mean, it's more so that now I have like, a much bigger platform than I used to. And so, and I tried to caution people, when they initially started following me, I'm like, I am not your educational resource. Like I'm just a girl, living my life. Like, of course, this is like what I do, because I'm passionate about media and how we all need to just have improved media literacy, and like better consumer spending habits in general, but I am, like, by no means a Rachael cargo, like, you know what I mean? Like, I am not an educator by profession. So like, if you are going to come here looking for that constantly, you need to go somewhere else. And I felt like very much like, Oh my gosh, this is, um, and it also like on social media, just things take on a life of their own. Like, it's like, I don't really have like any control over, like, how people respond to anything I post so but I what I do have control over is what I post. So I think the more careful you can be about things like the better it is, and I was just feeling so like weird about the fact that like, we had jet I mean, Jacob like did not die. But essentially, like, we have just witnessed



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another incident of police brutality. And it was it was almost like June didn't happen. You know? Like, I was like, this is like really weird. Like, why Why? Why even bother in the first place? posting all that saying all that going through all that drama, if you were just gonna do nothing, when another opportunity came around for you to do something.

BLK IRL 09:33

And I think that's a good segue to talk about the consultant company that you just started to bg. So two black girls with Christy Weatherford. Can you share how the idea to start a consulting company came about?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 09:47

I mean, it's really simple. Both of us have worked in this industry for a very long time. We have extensive relationships with other influencers with brands and we have been giving advice for free for years and Now they're going to pay us for it.

BLK IRL 10:02

I love that. Because I was actually going to ask you because you seem like the type of person that a lot of people probably come and ask you like, Can I pick your brain all the time? And they expect, like free advice? What is helpful for you, aside from creating this company, but how else do you establish boundaries for yourself on like, what advice do you want to give out freely? And what advice do you think is worth charging for?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 10:28

It's a really fine line. I think that I tend to just go with my gut and things that like feel really organic for me. But I also like, value myself enough and value my experiences enough that like, I don't do work for strangers, like at all like if my best friend wants to call me and be like, I had this the other day, my best friend was like, one of my best friends was like, a jewelry brand wants me to consult with them, like, how much should I charge? I will definitely tell her that I am not going to tell some random girl who DM me like what she should do, like for her major or like what she should, you know, charge for whatever. I'm like, I don't know you. So I don't I'm not gonna do that. And there's also plenty of resources out there. Like, I think it's like kind of crazy that so many people would just be like, instead of me trying to find out information, I'm just going to go ask this person as if she owes me something because I follow her.

BLK IRL 11:35



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And does that happen to you a lot in your DMs? Do people feel like entitled to free advice from you?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 11:41

Totally. I mean, I literally got someone the other day that was like, I'm going through a breakup, like, what should I do? I'm like, I'm kidding me get a therapist.

BLK IRL 11:48

Does that feel like pressure that people like want to put so much value on your opinion on personal matters like that in your life and their lives? Um,

DANIELLE PRESCOD 11:57

I mean, not really. But what I do is I turned my DMS off so I have the control on like, whether or not I let people in at that definitely lets me live my life in a better way. I can like go through them but like if they're all they probably won't see it. Like I don't check them all the time. I'm just because it gets so overwhelming. And I'm like, I don't have time for that. Chrissy, on the other hand responds to like, literally, like every single person that writes her and I'm like, That's insane. And I know you've I have other friends who are like career influencers, and they do too. And I'm like, I just am like,

BLK IRL 12:34

Do you consider yourself an influencer? Because I know you do a lot of collaborations with brands or you have in the realm before too.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 12:41

Um, I mean, I don't really consider myself an influencer. I consider myself someone who has a platform.

BLK IRL 12:49

What's the distinction for you? What does the word influencer evoke to you?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 12:53

Um, well, I mean, there are certainly people who was like, this is like their career, like, creating digital content for social media is like what they do 24 seven, but to me, that's like, not what I do. 24 seven,



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BLK IRL 13:06

Are you doing your work with too big in addition to your work at BET, like two jobs? That sounds like a lot? How do you how do you kind of manage your time to dedicate your efforts to build those responsibilities, and then your responsibility as a human being outside of your work?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 13:23

Well, it's definitely easier now that I have nowhere to go. But um, yeah, I mean, look, everyone in New York that I know has a million plates spinning. That's just like life here. Like that's how it is. I don't know anyone who has been working in media and hasn't had like several side hustles so it's like pretty normal, I think to have many things going on.

BLK IRL 13:47

Is there an alternative reality for you? Where you're not living in New York or where you're not working in the media?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 13:53

Oh, definitely. I'm at the end of this year. I'll be moving.

BLK IRL 13:57

Are you gonna move to Atlanta like everyone?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 13:59

I'm not.

BLK IRL 14:01

A lot of people are moving to Atlanta.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 14:03

I would never live in Atlanta. Um, I'm not gonna say we're moving. Yeah, I am moving I'm very excited.

BLK IRL 14:11

And what do you think in general you don't have to share where you're moving but I wonder where for a lot of people did the idea to move come because of these quarantine COVID times or is it something that you want?



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DANIELLE PRESCOD 14:22

Okay, I mean, I have been playing around with it but of course like for the function of my job, I would travel very often I have never spent this much time in my apartment before and I also never got this apartment with the intention to spend time in it. I'm like, I had never eaten real meals in here before. I'm like this is insane. I am just like I can see all of my possessions at once like I love interiors and I have worked hard on like making my apartment comfortable but like to like sleep in and like hang out with like, you know, one day a week like not 24 seven and also work from here. I think That is like, you know, and like I emailed you like the noise is just like insane. And there was an article in The New Yorker that my friend sent me about noise pollution and essentially, like honking, sirens, shouting, all that stuff triggers your fight or flight response, like all day long, like, you're just like, your body is like, Oh, we got to be a pay attention to this danger. We got to pay attention to this. And I'm like, working now from here and hearing that and trying to be creative. And I'm like, it is not possible. And it's also just like, not worth it anymore. Like I pay so much money. I tried to like unload my apartment, I tried to get out of my lease, and they were like, you cannot go I listed it to try and like get so much a bite. And like no one would, because it's a fortune. And guess what, we can't go to restaurants we can't go to shows we can't go to get into those movies get to anything. So like all the things that like made living in New York, so wonderful, don't really exist anymore, or like the things that kind of balanced off, like having such an expensive read don't exist anymore. So now it's like, like, why do I do this?

BLK IRL 16:04

Do you think? Since it seems like COVID has impacted the way you think about New York? Has it also impacted the way you think about work? Not really,

DANIELLE PRESCOD 16:14

I mean, I have been someone who has just like already a pretty conscious person and trying to explore my relationship with grind culture, and like what that is and what what it means. And so I have already been someone who was like thinking about like, I had a really healthy work life balance before COVID. Like, I mean, I would like leave at 4:30 sometimes, because I would be like, I have a 5pm Pilates class or I have a 5pm SoulCycle class. But I obviously can't do that anymore. So if anything, I think that COVID has, like complicated by relationship with like, how I work because like now, I'm just here all the time?

BLK IRL 17:03



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And do you find yourself turn into the internet more? Because it is where we work? We're looking at each other through a screen now. And it's also how we spend our leisure time? Has it impacted your relationship with technology?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 17:16

Not really, I've again, also been very conscious about tech or a while. So I I don't think that I like in danger of like, you know, over stimulating myself from like use of it.

BLK IRL 17:28

I want to turn now to talk more about the fashion industry because I think he can provide a lot of great insights about it. What kind of change do you think is needed in the fashion industry? And what's that look like to you?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 17:39

I mean, there needs to be a complete overhaul and everything. I think the first thing that the industry needs to do is just acknowledge its complicated history. And I think in fashion, we are so invested in the fantasy of things and that permeates throughout the industry to a level which like, has become like very toxic, because it doesn't really allow people to like, look at things or doesn't even allow people to be critical of things because it's like, oh, well, I don't want to say anything bad about this brand. Because maybe one day I'll want to wear it or one day, I'll want to work with them. And I'm like, What is this like fear culture or like it like it keeps us all so silent and obedient? And I'm just like, that is just so stupid. Like, like, we have to as a culture, examine our relationship to things and figure out like that, like we give them power, not the other way around.

BLK IRL 18:44

What you're saying is interesting to me. Because it seems like an issue that comes up a lot in the influencer space specifically, like not wanting to speak out against certain brands because of potential future relationships to cultivate. Do you find that that's where brands wield their power? and their ability to kind of say, like, we have the money and the funding for you? Yeah,

DANIELLE PRESCOD 19:04

I think that I think it's like, you know, the fact that they, a lot of these brands that are a little bit older or have more funding can provide things like trips and hotels and experiences and access to celebrities and all of these things that again, like you don't really work in fashion for the money like no one's making enough money here to like make it worth it. It is the access you get



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to like a glamorous lifestyle that really keeps people in it. But I mean, I think COVID I showed you like what, what is that really,

BLK IRL 19:40

One thing you've said before is that the fashion industry has a pathological dedication to avoidance. When it comes to addressing social issues head on. Ready think that dedication to avoidance comes from and who does it protect?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 19:54

Again, I think it like really is about us investing In this like fantasy, like, you know, everyone used to say like, oh, magazines are so glossy that you know, it's like this retouched beautiful world and all the people who work there are also beautiful, and nothing bad happens here. And it's just, it's very, very powerful. Because if the generation who has all of the positions that dictate, you know, raises or hiring or firing, are people who believe that then the people who like if you are not like, in line or in step with that, like, I don't really see how, how you, you advance in your career. And I think that the only way that we can have like, we live in a capitalist society. So frankly, if you're going to do anything you need capital, like no one will tell you, you can start a brand with no money. You cannot like you cannot subsist on creativity alone. Like it's just not possible. So people end up making exceptions and they they end up deciding what like really matters to them to be able to get their messaging out. And I think that along the way, you can get very lost.

BLK IRL 21:23

But, do you think do you think actual change is possible in the fashion industry? If those same kind of gatekeepers and old guard establishment people are still working in the industry? Yeah, cuz I think yeah, I think a lot about when they bring in like DNI, like it was a DNI, lead of a company now, but do that, do those leads always get the ability to fire people or hire people? And like, Are there just are, do they just end up being? Show ponies without power? Or is there a way for D&I to actually exist in a company for change? But it seems like you're saying no.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 21:59

I mean, I haven't seen it, though.

BLK IRL 22:01

So how do you plan to impact change with your consultant company?



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DANIELLE PRESCOD 22:06

I mean, like, Chrissy and I were, again, we've been in this industry for a decade, like, we, I don't have like any kind of like, dream that we're going to, like work with a brand for two or three months. And they're like, I mean, even some of our clients that we have now, I still think are behaving in ways that like, are just antithetical to like, what needs to happen. And so what but what I do, and I think that what most black editors do, is like you recognize, like, where you do have power, and you're like, I am going to do the best that I can with the resources that I have and the platform that I've been given. So like, I'm going to take this access and turn it into like something that could move the needle like it probably won't, in the grand scheme of things, but like, even if things just even get shaken up, I think it's useful.

BLK IRL 23:06

And what does that does shaken up look like? Does that look like people losing their jobs? Does that look like?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 23:14

Well? It has to some some people, yeah, some people might lose their jobs.

BLK IRL 23:18

And what do you think, thinking about influencer? marketing, specifically, what do you think needs to change about how brands and companies work with black influencers? specifically?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 23:28

I mean, the influencer space is like, so complicated, because there's so many people who like, just have like, really bad business sense.

BLK IRL 23:36

What do you mean, the brands or the influencers?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 23:38

The influencers.

BLK IRL 23:39

Okay.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 23:41



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So they're being taken advantage of by brands, and especially now in this moment, like I see it, even with some clients that I have, like, these girls will be so thirsty to get a cosign from a brand. They'll be like, Oh, yeah, I'll do something for free. I'm like, for free. Are you insane? That is labor. Like, why are you offering yourself like that? I'm like, and, and this is just like, to me, it's like a thing that gets me like, pissed off anyway. Because I'm like, now the brands are like, Oh, well, we don't have to pay this girl. Why is she asking for money? Because look, this one said, and she has 70,000 followers. She said, she'll do it for free. No problem. She reached out to us, you know, and so it creates this like economy where the influencers are giving away their power. And I think that like women do that too. Like I always am, like, Guys, stop offering to pay for dates. Because the more you do that, the more men will think that's okay. And then they're all gonna think that we're all need to pay for this. I'm not gonna sit across the table from a man and put have these down on anything. And again, I'm not going to do content for a brand without a check. I am not going to do content or exchange of a gift like absolutely not, but they're just And I also think that for so long there has just been, it's like shrouded in secrecy. Like who, you know, who gets paid what, what is this close and what is not. And so I encourage brands just like have like, total pay transparency. And I, I'm doing a project with a company next week, and I was, and they were like, Oh, we weren't really planning on paying people. And I was like, okay, won't do it. And then they were like, okay, we'll pay you. And I was like, You also need to pay every single other person, the same rate that you're paying me or I won't do it, because I don't want to be now getting paid, and know that I'm doing things with other women. And they're not getting paid.

BLK IRL 25:35

What was the rationale for them to not bring up money to table especially like, after this summer, and in this economy?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 25:41

I have no idea. It was so strange. I think that also again, though, they think they're so powerful. They think that like, people will just be like, oh, wow, look at this. They have like a million followers, like I should just say yes. And I'm like, I don't care.

BLK IRL 25:55

You mentioned like this type of like posting online as a form of labor. So the fact that people don't charge it makes me wonder, do you think that they don't see this as work or like true labor?



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DANIELLE PRESCOD 26:09

No, I think that they have an idea of where they want to go. And they have an idea of like, what brands they want to align themselves with. So they're more willing to, you know, give stuff away for free, or to take a different approach to it. Because, you know, a lot of black creators until June had not been getting approached by a lot of brands, and they might have been reaching out to brands and not have been getting any kind of response. So I think that they are looking at it as like, Oh, this is like a bigger picture thing. You know, this is like my way of like interning,

BLK IRL 26:43

And do you think that this work of influencing is sustainable? something you can do for a long time?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 26:48

I mean, for some people it is, I don't even know, like, Who would want to though? Like, it's like, I don't know, so lot.

BLK IRL 26:57

What do you mean by that?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 26:58

I'm like, it's a lot of work. And I don't know, like how useful it is. Um, so like, do I see myself doing this at 60? Like, and still like trying to, like, make money from it like, not really, you're, you're at the mercy of the platforms too. So, you know, if, like, when I remember when, like, tick tock, it was like, the headlines like Tick Tock is being sold. It's shutting down all these people who like whose primary platform is Tick Tock. We're getting all these like tearful goodbyes. And I'm like, Yeah, but I'm like, but now I'm like, wow, you're really getting your news from Tick tock, because anyone who knows anything would know that you can't just like, shut down an app in a day. Like, I'm like, What's going on?

BLK IRL 27:45

Literally, unless that well, I guess some of the people are too young to remember Vine. Maybe they thought of the end up like that.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 27:50



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Yeah, exactly. And that's the thing. It's like, there's a lot of people who were like, huge on Vine, and like, we never heard from them again.

BLK IRL 27:57

Why do you think people want to become influencers as similar to the fashion industry? And is like idea of a fantasy?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 28:03

Oh, yeah. For sure. People think that like, Oh my gosh, like, if I can do this, I can get, I can go on trips, and I can get, you know, invited to this party, or I can get dresses for free or whatever.

BLK IRL 28:15

And I wonder now just thinking about your experience as an editor, it seems more and more that there's a thin there's a thinner line between like, editor and like influencer, because now it seems like editors can kind of toe that line and play both editor and influencer, like do their own separate collaborations of brands outside of their day to day job. And what do you think about that gray line? And how do you negotiate negotiate those two identities?

DANIELLE PRESCOD 28:41

I mean, I think that everyone will answer this question differently. But for me, like, I had a lot of experience in print magazines. But I would do all this work. And like for I would, you know, if I was an assistant or assistant editor or whatever, and like, my name would not be on the page. So no one would know that I would do that work, no one would know that I picked that shoe or that bag, or I found that guard or I selected that image like no one would know that. And social media is like my opportunity and and a lot of other people's opportunity to be like, this is what I like is what I care about. And it's not dictated by work I don't have where I work. In my bio, I basically never talk about work, because I don't feel like I'm defined by my job. But there's a lot of people who do feel like they're defined by that and I'm like, I have other interests, I have other things going on and other things I'm doing. So I don't need to rely on talking about work as like a point of like, pay attention to me I'm interesting because I have this job. I'm interesting period. Like I could be a bum on the street. I would still be fun to watch. And I think that a lot of like people you know get really wrapped up in the, the titles they have or like the things they do like For money and, and, you know, that can get a little bit complicated. But I think that ultimately everyone should be able to choose like, who they work with, be able to say whatever it is that, you know, that's appropriate, of course, whatever it is that they want to on their own personal channels, like your job does not own you. There was like a time where like, a lot of



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people had their magazine in their handle. And I'm like, I never did that, because I'm like, I'm not Teen Vogue, Danielle, no way. Because I was also like, I'm not gonna like work here for the rest of my life. Like, who thinks like that? It's so crazy.

BLK IRL 30:34

I mean, that used to be the goal for a lot of people, like find a solid job and stay there as long as you can. But now, the work environment has changed a lie in which that's not always the case. Yeah. So instead of like, I think about New York now, and every time you meet somebody, especially in like this kind of hustle culture, they asked you like, what do you do? Let's a better question than that.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 30:55

I mean, I don't really ever asked anyone what they do. Like, I really don't.

BLK IRL 31:00

Yeah, I mean, I would prefer people not to.

DANIELLE PRESCOD 31:03

I just don't. I hate it actually. And then like, you know, they'll follow up with, like, try to play the name game. And I'm like, I'm already shut down. Like I already don't want to talk to you.

BLK IRL 31:17

That was my interview with Danielle Prescod. I feel like we covered a lot of ground. And it spoke to a lot of issues that my own research is concerned about. So I'm going to share a bit of at least the way I think about influencer marketing as inspired by my conversation with Danielle and as inspired by my own experiences, working in marketing, and studying marketing. One of the reasons that I started this podcast in the first place was because I was really curious about how COVID-19 has impacted the influencer marketing industry, and specifically how has a complicated the relationship people have with work? So this episode with Danielle in our conversation, you know, it really spoke to the very issues that underpin my own research and my own interest in studying influencers in the first place. Because ultimately, what has become a miss understanding of at least my own intentions in this type of scholarship is that I am assumed to be focused on social media platforms and social media companies. And actually, to the contrary, my research is about the influences themselves as workers influencing as a form of labor. This is an anthropology of work. So I've always been keenly focused on how influencer marketing is just a new form of work and how social media has changed arrays or evolve the



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ways that we live and work. And this is especially pertinent today. Let me think about COVID-19 in the fact that so many people have lost their jobs due to the corona virus pandemic, because what we're seeing, at least what I've been personally noticing is that more and more people have been supplementing their incomes with digital labor, with online work. So more and more people are joining what is called the gig economy, what you know, generally as the gig economy so oftentimes when there's conversations about gig economy, the conversations are focused on companies like Lyft, or Uber or TaskRabbit, any of these type of mainly online, promoted services, but influencing and content creation and even in generally freelance and these are gig careers. These are jobs that are a part of the gig economy, as well as I really want us to position they're considered the influencers themselves and content creators themselves are also gig workers. And what is so important about this and why this industry is so important to understand better is that when we look at things like a jobs report, for example, the US government they release a jobs report every month and the jobs report is calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, so BLS, so the BLS does not have a working definition for who or what good workers are there. There is no formal way of tracking good workers. The closest language that the BLS uses to this date is contingent workers. And contingent workers are people who work in what they consider to be temporary arrangements for a year or less. There is not a consideration that people perform gig work as long term career, you know that people have long term aspirations to be doing this type of work. It's only labeled as a temporary arrangement, usually to supplement your income. In addition to a more full time arrangement one has, it doesn't always consider the fact that people do this full time. And increasingly, because of the precarious nature of work right now, by precarious I mean, unstable, more and more people are turning to online work as their full time jobs or full time careers. Some estimates say that almost 60 million people are contingent workers, some estimates say it can be as many as 75 million people, I'm sure the number has increased over the past year, there, there could be a chance that the reason when you see the job reports changed so much is because people are supplementing their income, the gig work or secondary work or doing gig work full time, but they're not being counted in the jobs reports, or at least in the most efficient and to to form ways to define the type of work that people are doing today. So that's why I find this work on understanding influencing, as a former labor are so important, because this is the world we live in. This is just a larger conversation about the gig economy. And it really changes the way we now approach each other. So there used to be that, you know, back in the before times, you would go to an event and you would meet somebody and maybe that person would ask you that icebreaker question that we all kind of dread. So what do you do? But now what do you do? This question is almost moot because what we do and who we work for and whether or not we have a job has changed so much in the past year. According to a survey from



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the Pew Research Center that was released in September, a quarter of US adults said that they or someone in their household was laid off or lost their job because of the coronavirus outbreak. The survey also found that many workers who didn't lose their jobs still had to reduce their hours, or take a pay cut due to the economic fallout from the pandemic. I believe that the covid 19 pandemic has really forced all of us to consider who we are outside of our work, or at least to find work that better reflects who we are. And that is exactly what Danielle was talking about in our conversation that she means this the urge to define herself by her job. The Pew Research Center survey also found that black and Hispanic Americans were the most likely to have faced deep financial hardship as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. And to me, this really indicates a ration never be separated from a general analysis of work as well. You know, one of the things that I will in my application to enroll into a Ph. D program is that I was really interested in something that I had at the time I really came to the Ph. D program with a theory of mind, I wanted to call it the monetization gap. I had a theory just based off of my years of experience working in a marketing industry and seeing budgets, like I've seen the numbers that black and Hispanic influencers and content creators did make less than their white counterparts, the budgets for those more what they call niche. marketing campaigns are smaller. So thereby, I concluded that they did make less but of course, clients will never admit to this, and it's not a pay transparency really is not a thing in marketing. Nor is it a thing in the influence and marketing industry, at least from my professional vantage point at that time. So I wanted to study or do research to affirm what I felt was happening. And I call it the monetization gap. This is a name I came up with. But again, this is something that people don't talk about. So I was really refreshing in Daniel's remark remarks about the influence and marketing industry and even the fashion industry that she was so transparent about money that the fact that people don't work in fashion for the money, you work in fashion for the access, people don't work in influence and marketing, you know, maybe not only for the money, they also do it for the access. And this really speaks to the trends that we've seen over the past months with Instagram accounts like the influencer pay gap that has really shined a light to the pay discrepancies and the influence and marketing industry and how race is often a factor in how much people are paid for their labor. The employee pay gap is an Instagram account that was created by Adesuwa Ajayi. And she's a black woman who works at the talent agency AGM. And she manages influencers. So she created this Instagram account, where she started to ask influencers anonymously to detail their past brand campaigns and to share their engagement rate. And an engagement rate is what percentage of people interact with their content. Our numbers are very big in this industry, and how much they were paid, what they do their race and where they're based. So this was an essentially a global survey, anyone who's an influencer can submit even to this day via DMs. Ajayi started this account back in June, and the



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head has already grown to over 47,000 followers at the time of this recording. And she says that she made this account after working with influencers for a few years and realizing what I had also realized that black influencers, experiences pay and access to opportunities aren't equal to their white counterparts. So this is something that more and more and more people are acknowledging and talking about influencers are beginning to have conversations amongst each other about who's getting paid for what and this pay transparency is really important and something that should be more common in across all industries, because we have heard the facts before about the pay gap between women of color, and white men, women in general, and white men. So there will be more conversations about this as influencing begins to get taken up as a legitimate career and illegitimate labor force. And perhaps, and this is something that I want to keep an eye on, we will see the Bureau of Labor Statistics, consider ways to more efficiently highlight the work, or the labor of content creators within the gig economy or to release better define what it means to be a gig economy worker. I want to thank all of you for listening to this first season of The Black and Bill Live podcast. This is not the last episode. This is the episode before the last episode. But this is the last episode where I will be hosting a one on one conversation with a guest at the next episode, which is episode nine. And the final episode of this verse season will be a little different. And I'm excited for you to hear what that sounds like. But before that, I just want to take this opportunity to thank you for engaging with this project and supporting it if you can, and I never accessed before, but I totally should have these review and rate this podcast five stars if you feel like as a five star check on Apple podcast because that will get more eyes and ears on it and hopefully generate more support for this project. So again, thank you for supporting the Black in Real Life Podcast and I will see you in a couple weeks right before the New Year's for episode nine. You have just listened to a production of the Black in Real Life Podcast hosted by Anuli Akanegbu developed by Anuli Akanegbu scripted by Anuli Akanegbu Edited by Anuli Akanegbu. With research support by Anuli Akanegbu. The music was graciously provided by Garth, 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.