

Kelechi Okafor

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And so when I had this book proposal out, you know, and publishers met me with, yeah, you know, black women and anger, but how do we make it universal? I was like, well, not everybody's called an angry black woman. And of course, our outrage is used against us. Well, we just don't know if that demographic will buy it. Also, black women don't read. Is that where we're going? 2s Welcome to Women Our Land, where we invite women to bring their anger into everyday conversation. We're all feeling it. Let's get together to work out what to do with it. I'm Cinema Saxton, I'm an actress and writer. I'm Jennifer Cook and I'm a psychotherapist. We notice that anger is the one emotion that women aren't allowed to express. Meanwhile, everything around us is making us absolutely furious. By talking about women's anger freely. We hope to inspire you to do the same. Salima, can I tell you something that's making me mad this week? Please? So it's when people say. And it really is mostly women, as far as I've heard it. Um, when when women tell themselves. Oh, no, but we have to understand this person instead of feeling hurt or angered by them because they probably meant, well, um, we need to see the best in them. We need to think about how they intended it rather than how it came across. Ah, no, we fucking don't. Hmm. Stop it. Stop doing all the work for them. This really ties in to what I was going to talk about, actually, because. Um, I was reading, reading this thing about mirror neurons. Oh, yeah. Love that. Yeah, yeah. Can you explain? Because you'll do it better than me, obviously. Well, it's basically from, from babyhood. We see them activated and they are the parts of our brain where we're learning mostly socially. You know, what we do with other people and with other people's minds. So like, so kind of to respond to, um, well, the actions that we, we're seeing in others that we're observing in others. Yeah. So link to what you're saying. I'm very aware and I was having a conversation with Kara Giles, actually, um, about this, the brilliant writer. Yeah. Who was talking about feeling one's feelings slightly too much and responding over empathically to whatever is in the room. Also, I think that is linked to explaining away other people's behaviors because you're trying to empathize your hypervigilant about empathizing and feeling what they're feeling, and you can feel that there's a kind of odd atmosphere, or they're nervous or they're worried or whatever, and you're trying to leap in and fix it all and work it all out, rather than, as you quite rightly say, they said this, their behavior was this. I don't like that. Yeah. At the end. Right. Dun dun. Yeah. I don't need to do that work. Yes. Or you know, either improving the situation, making them feel better. Yeah. Um, making them come away with a different experience. Yes. And, and basically absorbing all of those bad feelings that they put into me. Yes. So, um, I was reading that some highly sensitive people, they're mirror neurons are overly active. Can I put it that way or they use them more. So yeah. Constant kind of feeling out of everybody and how everything is. Yeah. That uses up as you as you say, it uses up so much energy. And I have to say that behavior is skewed towards women, the oversensitive overactive one. And you always do say to me when I'm feeling kind of odd about people or other things, use the energy elsewhere. Yeah, you always say that to me. And I think that is great advice because. Do you remember? You know, like a few years ago, I used to be exhausted. And really weird reasons, didn't I? Yeah. You would say to me, why are you so tired? I think it was because I was constantly scanning the horizon. Honestly, I think it comes from when we are. When we're scared, you know, when we have grown up feeling frightened. And if we're honest, a lot of women do. Um, then you have to rely on these other parts of your mind. You can't just be present. You can't just be in you. You have to be doing the scanning, scanning, scanning all the time. And isn't it odd how you you can always hear it in my voice, you know, always when I call you and

I go, hi. And you're like, are you there? Yeah. Like, yeah, I've gone, sorry. It sits in your throat, I hear it. Yeah. But that's so interesting about schematically where that kind of fear sits, right? That you can hear it in the tone of your friend's voice. And that's so awful as well, when you think about how many women go kind of shrill when, when actually they're, they've got something to say and it's important and they're feeling something very strong. And it comes out as this little weedy because because this is, you know, we don't feel like we're allowed to just take up that. Well, I know I don't agree with you. I feel like I am allowed to take up that space because of who I surround myself with these days, who my partner is, where I am. I do feel I'm allowed, but the patterns in my life, and I suppose our society has always worked. Yeah, I, I find it sticking. Yeah. Because you're fighting against all of the years of not being allowed. Absolutely. That's the thing. Yeah. And also, uh, my family of origin, you know, my dad, all of that. It's I think that's what we're always up against, isn't it? It's the. Yeah. Well, we always say this, don't we? That pattern, you know, that ten year old Selima, right? Ten year old Jen. Yes. Yeah. It's. And it's the socialising and it's the, it's the, it's the stuff coming in systemically but it's the stuff coming in from a family level. And the two. Wow. That is that's potent. So listen I'm going to go ahead and introduce our wonderful guest for today. She is an actor. She's a writer. She's a communicator. To borrow from one reviewer, she captures the fleeting otherworldliness of our everyday lives. To borrow from her, we weave words into being just by threading the needle of hope through the seemingly impossible eye of reality. Please welcome the heartbreakingly talented collection car for, um, collection. We're going to get straight into it, and I'm going to ask you, what makes you angry? Is What makes me angry is legislation. I'm so fed up. Like, I know we're not meant to say it, because obviously we know that terrible things have happened in the past. Um, but it's like sometimes I feel like certain politicians need a slap, like, I just, I really like it's ridiculous to legislate the way that we see it. It's very transphobic, very queer phobic, very misogynistic. And we're just it's very femme hating. And yet, you know, time after time we see people like don their suits, go into Parliament and try to make everything seem like it makes sense. I don't think I could do that. I think that if I went into Parliament, I'll just start shouting and trying to fight because I it really, really enrages me that we don't get enough of a say over the things that deeply affect our lives. I think also you've hit it when you say about them sticking to a script, right, and playing a kind of game, and how you wouldn't be able to do that. Because that's how I always feel about it, that I would want someone just to say it and to call it, rather than this, like beautiful game of croquet that everyone is constantly playing there. Um, but within which particular legislation you're talking about, I don't think there is just like one in particular. I think that I think what comes to mind definitely is the abortion, you know. Oh, yeah. Abortion rights. And and I just think to myself, like, there are various reasons why people might want to terminate or finish a pregnancy. Um, there are so many like mitigating factors. And so to just say that you can't do this because I'm going to tell you how I want it to run, that's deeply unfair. And at the same time, you know, I mean, I, I have my views, I have my conspiracies. Right? But I feel like because white women or white birthing people are having children less. A lot of the imperialist states. That's America. That's the, you know, the UK specifically are putting in legislation to basically force white women specifically to have more children because there is the fear of the black planet or the, you know, the non-white planet. And so for that reason, it's like, no, you need to have children, because if you don't, then who's going to maintain the status quo? Then what's going to happen? Because even if this feels in the realm of conspiracy, I think unconsciously you have hit the nail once again. How was your experience? You had a child, didn't you? Um, in. Yes. So I had I had my son in 2019 before that, I, you know, I had another pregnancy where I, you know, had a pregnancy loss and I had to see firsthand heartbreakingly so the anti-black nature of the healthcare system. And, you know, how did that manifest? Can actually what was that in terms of, um, you know, I wouldn't want to trigger anyone. So a trigger trigger warning, trigger warning. Um, on the day that, you know, I

experienced my pregnancy loss, it was in April, I think 2018, I was going ahead teaching a class. As you know, I wanted to teach a class as normal, even though I had cramps. I'd been to the hospital to say, hey, something doesn't feel right. Oh, go away, it's perfectly fine. Go. So I thought, all right, fine. And so I go to teach the class and then it starts like the whole process starts. And luckily there was a paramedic that was off duty. She loves coming to my work classes. She happened to be there. I had to stop the class and she went. It was a twerk class. Sorry you were in a physical twerk class? Yeah, I was teaching a twerk class and on a Sunday, you know, shaking our booty for the Lord. And then that, you know, happened. And I remember being in the Uber and then the gushes, like the blood started out, there were just gushes of blood. And I just felt bad for the Uber driver that I was so kind of, you know, like when you're in that zone, I guess I was like, oh my God, like his, his seats or my God. And then she booked the Uber. She's going to get a one star rating. This is horrendous. Oh my god. All of the conditioning right there was like just bloody poor the poor them. Yeah. Yeah. Somebody else. Yes. Or everybody else. And so we get there and because she's a paramedic, she's trying to take me through the entrance that she would go through if she were, you know, in an ambulance and this white man sees us coming through. I remember I was wearing camo shorts and it was just red, and there was a trail of massive red following me. And so embarrassing at the same time is also what I felt. And so we come where he's seen us walking and I'm drenched like Carrie, right? Just drenched. And he goes, you can't use this entrance. ^{3s} Yeah. Can I just also just pause a snack because you're embarrassed? What about all of your pain? Your emotional pain? But isn't that fascinating? Like you say, the conditioning just came to the fore. I was just like, you know, when we see you think about the period adverts that we see, rarely are they never blue, blue, blue. So I'm now red and it's like, oh, we're not meant to show this. I'm not meant to show you this. Did you get in? What happened? Who spoke to the guy? The the white woman who happened to be with me? I always say that that was a blessing that day. And to me, that was true allyship. She was like, absolutely not. We're going through this insurance because this is where I'd come through as a paramedic. And so we're doing this right now and it's like, oh, oh, oh, oh, okay, sure, come through. But if I hadn't been with her, I would have been turned right around gushing with blood. Go through the other and let everybody see you that way. Go on. Um, oh, and there were just so many things that happen. So I ended up writing, and I remember I was, you know, laying there waiting for them to do an ultrasound that they said that they wouldn't be able to do until Monday, even though this was a Sunday and for whatever bureaucratic reasons that they had in place. And, um, I was then messaging some clients because they were going to have a party with me after the class. So I was going to I was planning to be at the, you know, studio for quite a while that day. So I was going to teach the twerk class, and then I was going to teach a hen party, I think. And so I was messaging them saying, I'm so sorry, I won't be able to teach the class. I'm really, really sorry. I'll sort out a refund for you, or we can arrange another day. And you know, that moment was so pivotal for me in my life that I really needed to look on at me and be like this. This is what you're doing. This is where your life has gotten to because you're trying to girlboss the thing. It's trying to do this, all of that. What happened? Sorry, sorry. Everyone else. I'm so embarrassed. Right. And so from the, you know, all of that, I remember I was then eventually taken up to a ward and this nurse, she gave me painkillers. Um, and she's like, I think that this will help. They should kick him soon. And then she forgot to close the door so she didn't close the door completely. And I heard her at the desk saying, yeah, I've given her painkillers, but they're not going to work. Is anyone coming round anytime soon in terms of any of the doctors? Um, to check in on her. And they. I heard her say her name. Oh, Kelechi. Collect your car for. Oh not till. Okay, so they were basing who they were going to check based on the name. If the name didn't sound. What, like Sally Smith? It wasn't going to happen. Oh, and so because I knew that none of this was in my head, I had to deal with it for other women, you know? So I wrote to the hospital and I listed everything, literally itemized everything from the

beginning, you know, entering, you know, coming through that A&E and entrance all the way through to her treatment, everything that you know, that nurses treatment, everything. And I got a letter back saying yes. What you said here. Correct. Yeah. This also happened. Yes. This also happened. And we're really sorry. Everywhere there was like, yes, this happened and we're really sorry. And it got to the end. And the person who wrote it, the head of women's Health or whatever at the hospital said, But I'm just deeply disappointed that you think any of this had anything to do with your race. ^{3s} Oh, I said okay. Wow. Oh, there we go. You're disappointed? You know, it's that weapon. It's that weaponization of disappointment. Woman. Say weaponization. Yes. You're disappointed that I would highlight something so glaring. And, you know, now we think about a recent case at Liverpool Women's Hospital where they had to say this woman died and this pregnant woman died. And, you know, race had something to do with it. Racial discrimination. They couldn't get around that one. So if you don't mind me asking, when you had your son, um, how how was how was it being in hospital and your treatment with midwives, and how was it for you? You know, I'd been advocating for a number of years at this point before having my son about, you know, the fact that black women, um, you know, as the embrace report says, black women are five times more likely to die during childbirth in comparison to white women. And some people would hear the stat and they'd be like, oh, but why could that possibly be? No, let's not make it about that. You couldn't possibly be race. Maybe it's what you're eating. Maybe it's a language barrier. You know, all of these excuses were given, and then I had to experience it firsthand, not just in terms of, um, you know, my, uh, pregnancy loss, but when I was then, you know, going into labor with my son, I remember my waters broke, I want to say, on a Wednesday, probably, you know, I think it was a Wednesday and my water was broken out. You know, you get told in all the antenatal classes. So you weigh and then this and then that. Wait for the contractions I started getting so like, really, really, uh, you know, painful contractions. And I started throwing up all of these things. I'd go to the hospital. Oh, no, you're only a little bit dilated. Go home. I went back and forth, back and forth a number of times. They didn't believe me that my waters had broken. You were making it up. It got to Saturday and I was just like, this is actually ridiculous. I'm in severe pain. Like, this is wild. And it's only when I then had this younger midwife, because up until that point I did see white and black midwives, you know, I did, and sometimes the black midwives were even more strict with me, like especially the older sort of aunties. They were like, go, go, go go, go. You're not, you're not that, you know, go away and you know you're strong. I remember one of them saying, are you an African girl? Be strong. ^{1s} So I was like, okay, gets the Saturday. Just can't bear it anymore. Then we start, you know, looking at this, looking at that. And they realized that my waters had in fact broken when I said they had on the Wednesday. Um, and, you know, um, then they start panicking, giving me antibiotics, all of these things because they start worrying. Yeah, they start worrying and then they're like, okay, we might have to induce labor, um, you know, to get you more dilated and all of these things. Um, it was a very, very stressful process. I'm lucky that when it got to actually birthing my son, there was wonderful midwives so attentive at that point, but they were so apologetic. They were like, you know, Wednesday to Saturday without enough, you know, much water, amniotic fluid around your son. That was that was crazy. That was wild. Oh, that was wild, actually. Have you always been somebody who's been able to articulate exactly what you require? Not from a place of calmness? No. I think I learned the calm part later on. It would usually be, you know, when I'd gotten to that point of anger and then I'd have to just say it as an outburst. Um, and then sometimes people, because of the force with which I was using to say it, they'd be taken aback, like, oh, you could have just asked, like, what's going on? And so I had to not wait for my anger to get to that point. I, you know, I had to start learning that I don't just have to use anger to get my point across. But I remember growing up, that's possibly one of the only ways I felt like I could be heard. You know, other you just y y, though. I think I'm raising my I use that word intentionally, raising my two

brothers as well as myself and in some regards my mom. So it would get to that point where I'd have to be like, I need some space so I'd be able to have it, because otherwise it was just like, well, this is what you do as the eldest daughter. You just look after everybody and you just put your needs to the side and that follows you throughout life, right? You, you're putting everybody else's needs first. And the only way I could, you know, put my needs or assert myself was to use anger, utilize anger to kind of get that point there. But then that would undermine sometimes what I was saying because of the force. Yeah. I'd love you to bring me to the race for a second. That's all right. Um, the angry black woman trope. How does one. I don't even know the question to ask you at this point collect yourself. But, you know, that's obviously in my head when you talk about anger and other people's response to it. If it's coming from from you, how how is that for you? If that's not an odd question, no, not at all. I think that that's been one of the greatest blessings of my life. You know, being able to understand anger through therapies, through reading a hell of a lot and researching and speaking to other black women specifically, um, and just people across the board. How anger is that surface emotion, right. What it's what's underneath is the pain. It's the hurt. It's the fear. Right. And so being able to understand that I understood that my anger has a place. There is a reason that I'm feeling angry. It's an indication it's a light letting me know that something isn't quite right, that equilibrium is not there. Right. And so then it's about using that anger constructively. So as I started to learn, um, about all of this, when a pole dance studio in Manchester said that they didn't like my style of work, a white owned studio didn't like my style of twerk, um, you know, because it intimidated them, because it was being taught properly. Um, I was angry about that response, but that anger also fueled me to then open my studio in August of that year. It happened in January. I opened my studio in August. So what I started to learn was that anger, there is a use for it. And if we use utilize it, if we implement it constructively, we can change things, because sometimes we need that as the force to break things down and so we can put something else in its place. And so I wanted to in 2019 I believe. I had a book proposal out. I wanted to write about anger and how anger could be a liberating force for black women. Because oftentimes, whether black women or otherwise, the thing that patriarchal society is telling us, you know, labeling us with, stereotyping us with usually is the key to our own liberation. But because they say it in such a pejorative manner, we go the other way. Oh, I don't want to be the angry woman. I don't want to let me go the other way and just placate everybody and just let everybody trample on my head, because I don't ever want to be seen as angry. But that was that's always the that was the key. That's the way out. So it's like an own goal, isn't it? Yeah. So, you know, I had this proposal out. You know how anger can be a liberating force, whether it's in the workplace, whether it's in relationships, whether it's, you know, in terms of finances, we have to utilize it. It's right there. And and I don't think it's, um, you know, it's unkind of it's I don't think it's coincidental that, um, black women are overrepresented when it comes to fibroids. I often think that the things that we refuse to feel, it calcified, it finds a way to find some way in our bodies. Right? Yes. And and and anger. I can't I can imagine how anger then is sitting right in those areas, sitting in our reproductive organs or around our reproductive places in you. Yes, yes. And then we think about, um, the historic nature of black women being forced to kind of breed or, you know, to force to have children in order for the, quote unquote, the industrial revolution, for the transatlantic slave trade and for the imperialist societies to thrive, black women needed to have children. South Asian women needed to have children in order to create the workforce for that to take place. Unpaid labour, by the way. And so what does that do to you, intergenerational or intergenerational? Intergenerational, when you pass that on? And there are studies now to say that we do we can't. It happens in the South. You can't pass it on. I put genetics. Absolutely. And I also think the, the, the colonial, the colonial generational trauma is such an interesting thing to talk about. I look at it, even if I look at my own mother's and my mother is Pakistani, and I look at how how Gen knows her, how much her anger is internalized even in her 80s, and how she ate the British very much. My mother is

terribly, terribly English. Yeah. Um, you know, and you can understand why. Um. And. But my mom is furious. She would never let you say that about her. No, but she is furious. My mother and many, many of our mothers who have experienced in one way or another, colonial depravity. They are angry. But we say, my mom won't say to tell you that my mom would be like, oh, you know, I know the National, the the, you know, the national anthem. I'm like, good on you, you know? Okay, fine. But, you know, these are things that they were taught to be proud of. Yes. And so when I had this book proposal out, you know, and publishers met me with, yeah, you know, black women and anger, but how do we make it universal? I was like, well, not everybody's called an angry black woman. And of course I am. Rage is used against us. Well, we just don't know if that demographic will buy it. Oh, so black women don't read? Is that where we're going? And also how do we become. How do we become allies if we don't understand it? Right. Where where do these tropes come from? What what what is this? What does it mean? And so of course, the chapter samples were there where I break it down. I take us through, you know, the construct of race. And we think about Carolus Linnaeus in 1735, you know, of course, you can name dinosaurs. Why don't you come and name some human beings for us? And we've got the home of the Homo Europeans and that, you know, really, really helped to bolster, you know, colonialism in the transatlantic slave trade. So I break it all the way down. I talk about, you know, um, James Marion Sims and the speculum and how it was and tried and he kind of fine tuned his invention on enslaved black women without anesthesia, you know, so these things that we call our modern day inventions or the modern day father of gynecology, black women had to suffer for that to happen. So. There is a reason why I'm focusing on black women specifically. And then the offers came in and I was just like, okay, you're being disrespectful with these offers. Um, you know, so I'm not taking anything. And so I left it as that. Then 2020 happened, George Floyd is murdered. And then the, you know, the publishers start spinning the block I always collect. She's still thinking about writing that book. Wow. That immediate and then what what happened that where's the book? But I'm better. Yeah, well, I'm busy, so we're not getting any book now. ^{1s} Come on, let me. Yes. No, listen, listen, we need this. We need this book. I think what you're saying, like, I read this gorgeous thing. You write this book about, um, your husband's polish, is he? Yes. Yes, yes. And how you wrote about otherness in this way. So through the lens of race, you access so many other experiences. Yes. You know, there are other black or. But but I think we all need this book. This is your power. I'm buying this book. This is it. We're signed up. But tell tell us as well, because I think this is a good example. Right. Anger that maybe you haven't managed to work through and mobilize and use for you here is stark. We're hearing it. Maybe this is part of its journey and, you know, come through. Yeah come through. You're going to process it. But how do you process like what is that experience for you? How does it happen with that particular book? What I realized is that sometimes, you know, rejection, not necessarily rejection because they wanted it, but I felt like there was an element of rejection in the terms of what they were offering for it. And my agent was like, you know, take it because, you know, once it's out there in the world, it'll do what it needs to do. But what I was understanding from that is that actually know what can happen is that if this is what they're offering now in terms of marketing and publicity, they won't do right by it. And I also I needed to see what anger could do in real time. So when I was able to watch the marches, you know, I saw people across the world marching for George Floyd, for Breonna Taylor, and for other causes that then suddenly came to the fore and they really, really wanted to talk about. Then I saw and then I realized, maybe I need to take longer. Maybe I need to observe anger for a bit longer, because, yes, actually it isn't just about. It's the way that black women's anger is criminalized and it's villainized. But let me also see what that looks like when other people use their anger constructively. What changes? And so we're seeing marches after March, after March every weekend now for, for, you know, for the genocides and for the things that were seen playing out in our society. And we're seeing it shifting public opinion,

people are going to pick up books because they want to learn. They're like, I just don't want to go with what you've told me. I want to figure this stuff out for myself. So anger. Use constructively might also inspire others to go and educate themselves. And I'm all for self sovereignty, so people are able to rule themselves in a much more, um, um, kind of conducive way in a, in a much more progressive way because they're going and they're learning. They're like, why are those people so angry? Why are they outside all the time? Every weekend they're outside shouting why? And then they go and read up on it. So what it's actually happened is, yeah, I, you know, I make light of it and I say, oh, I'm being petty. I'm actually now observing. So maybe I needed more time. And it's not about me universalizing and universalizing this experience and taking it away from black women, but it's trying to contextualize it and say, but see, because when black women do it, you don't seem to get it. But then see what when it happens here you. So I can start comparing and contrasting all of these things for the, for the chapters. But um, and then also I feel like then with the experience that I've had right in the fiction as well as the picture book, I'm understanding the publishing industry more. So when I go back out with the, um, with the proposal, I have a more kind of coherent, uh, kind of way of all manner of delivery for what I'm trying to kind of put forward and say, this is how it benefits you, because I've realized with publishing is I've got to show you how it benefits you, and this is how it benefits black women because you don't care. I've got to show you how it benefits you. So how has it been navigating the publishing world for you? At times? Extremely frustrating because race and gender does come into it a lot. Race, class, gender, all of it comes into it when it comes to publishing, because there is this element of you don't know where the professionals you don't know. I say to you, for instance, I have a very, very engaged audience. They're probably going to want me to sign these books before now, you know, before I see them. And all of the no, no, no. Why would they want. You're a new author. So I don't, you know, kind of hold back on that. And then when there's a massive queue and they're worried that I'm, I'm not going to be able to get through the queue and sign everybody's book. So it's like, are you were right. We've never seen anything like that before. We never sorry. Just are. Look at that. So? So we often ask people, how do they, um, deal with anger when the when the when when do they find it difficult to express anger. So in professional environments like this do you find it difficult to navigate and angry thoughts? I think that I've kind of made a career out of being rather direct, never rude. Right? And I think that we can avoid the rudeness if I'm direct in that moment, and I find it so fascinating, even from an anthropological perspective, how we dance around saying things in emails, oh, I'm just going to circle back. Can we put a pin in? Oh, sorry. Particularly white middle class English, don't you think? It depends where we are in the world. And who's saying right. So I just write it and I say, well, this you know, I find this a bit frustrating because, you know, I noticed this, this before we got here. So I tried to call things out in the moment so it doesn't build up. But also if I know that there's something particularly scathing that I need to say, that's what an agent is. Therefore, I'm so blessed to have my agent, Sally Anne, because Sally and I will say, I told her, ah, she's like, okay, okay, built a filter. She's very good at playing the long game. And sometimes I'm like, let's not play the long game. Let's kick down the door, you know? And this is why a balance, it's a, a balancing of energy is necessary. Even at that time it was just like, yeah, but you know, even academics, they're not being offered what you're being offered. And, you know, consider all of these things. And I was like, sorry to those academics, but I know what I deserve and I'm not taking this right. And also you're going to have written a different book. It won't have been an academic book that just stays in universities. It was a book for all. So you can they can be offered that. Sorry to them. They deserve more all their years of research. Why aren't they getting more? But they can't be my benchmark. Nobody's my benchmark. I don't care what anybody else has done before. I'm doing something different. And, you know, so we learn from each other because there'll be, you know, there have been things where I've been told manager expectations because this is what they pay usually for something like this. I'm

like, that's fine, but that's not what I'm going to get. And sure enough, that's not what I get. I get more than that. We're learning. Yeah. We're learning. And do you think because Salima and I often talk about this like almost the sort of manifesting idea of going, right, this is where I envisage this, um, experience going? And do you find that often that that is a sort of, um, it comes to pass if it's an energy, isn't it? You bring into something most definitely. Definitely. So I'm really into human design. I'm a generator. When you look up your human design type, if you don't know, what does that mean? I don't know what that means. I'm a worker, I'm a worker, and I can't really. Or I'm told that with the way that my structure works, I can't manifest. Things. I can manifest a situation and environment, a feeling. So where before I would see other people manifesting things that were very, very specific. Every time I've tried anything specific, it's not how I wanted it to be. It doesn't ever work how I want it to work. My kind of task as a generator is to respond to life, to respond. I'm not an initiator. Somebody else initiates, right? Right. You want me as an initiator? Because then when we look at the let's then look at the kind of the experiences that I've mentioned thus far, how did I end up opening the my own pole studio, my first pole dance studio I responded to, yeah, a white woman telling me that I'm not going to have you do what you're doing in my space. And so I went, ah, cool. That means I need another space. I call you a trampoline. You like, you kind of like you're like, okay, I just bounce, but like, bam, I'm going. And maybe that that actually articulates the energy of the anger that you're talking about. Exactly. Doesn't it? You bounce, take that. And you, you use it for something else. Yeah. So if you show me creative, you're very quick because also you're like, okay, what are you saying? Okay. No, I'll do this going, you know, if I go right. And and specifically, I was just angry when she said that I was just like, what? And then these other women were like tweeting at me online, and they said, why don't you open your own pole studio? Why don't you open your own own pole studio? And to me, it was ludicrous the first time I heard it. And then I kept getting messages upon messages saying the same thing. And so I responded to them, are more but more than a response. I would say that you're open, right? So like, you kind of you hear something and then you're like, okay, this is the vibe. This is I'm going to go that way. Yeah. I never saw myself having a building. You know, by that point I was a personal trainer. I was doing really well, you know, as a personal trainer, um, hiring somebody else's space whenever I needed it to train my clients. And I was doing great. I didn't think, you know, and also, I was teaching pole dance as well at somebody else's studio. Everything else felt like this is working for me. Why in heaven's would I want my own space? I don't see that. I'm an actress, you know? I've got to be ready. Because any day now, I'm going to have my big break. Huh? So, 1s hello? Yes, 2s it's still to come. It's a. 2s No. Do you know what? Also, what I have really learned of being an actor is that so many times me, in so many of my friends, have had these big breaks. And then. And then you have this beautiful moment. Yeah. And then it's then it's gone again. It's all so fleeting, though, isn't it? Like when you look at the turnover on Netflix, it's like, here's this week's smash hit, wait for the next one. And so you get your break, but then someone else gets theirs and then yours. That's why it's great to be a generator. Right. And, uh, and a multi-hyphenate. I love that, Imogen. And this is good, isn't it? Yeah. Because, like, I just think I just think ungenerous as this as well. It's just like it's about just doing. Yeah. Don't think, don't think, don't think too much. Forge. For just a while. I think what I've kind of honed in on is that I'm just going to experience joy. I'm going to explore joy in the meantime. And it's fascinating that then things sort of find me. You know, I remember saying when I wanted to write a book, so the anchor book wasn't actually what I wanted to write. In the first instance. I wanted to write fiction. You know, I like, you know, telling stories. I didn't think of myself as a writer, but when I kept being approached, I said, well, if I was going to write anything, I think I'd want to write fiction, but I need money. Give me money first so I can go and sit down and write it. And I remember my agent saying to me, actually, they don't give money for fiction. They don't give you an advance for fiction in that way. You've got to go and write it first and present the manuscript.

I said, ah, interesting. Okay. So I go about just living my life, doing my thing. Lo and behold, I get a DM. Would you like to write a short story for this anthology that we're putting together love stories by women of color? Sure. I write the short story for that. This is incredible. Would you want to write your own book? Ah, give me money for writing. ^{1s} And so my first, you know, deal for in terms of fiction was a preemptive they hadn't seen anything other than that. Wow. So wanted happened. What was I just to say to people listening? This is so unheard of in this world. This is not a regular story. This is so unheard of. But I think that we're living in very anomalous times. Right. Good. Anything can happen at any time. Like the ways that we've been told that this society functions. The people in Parliament are smarter than we are. They've gone to all of these schools, and they are the ones that will make all of the decisions. And then we're seeing that actually there are a bunch of idiots. Yeah, a lot of the time. Right. Basically, if you've got the money, if you could just be probably a white man, not not doing much in terms of the household and all of those kind of things. Just a year per year for yourself. You have time to write your book, absolutely. Paying for it, because you're probably receiving some sort of fund from someone anyway. Exactly. So then how does how do the rest of us. Right then how do we like how are we going to sit down, never get heard. Right, right. And so when I, you know, was told, okay, based on this chapter that you've written and in the synopsis you've given for this short story collection that you want to write, here's some money for a two book deal. Right? And the whole time my agent is like, I need you to understand. And actually, this rarely happens. Not. Yeah. You don't get your I say, ah, but it's what I wanted to happen. So. This is so incredible. Yeah. Um, I'm going to pull you into our rage room. Yes. We thank you for, ^{1s} um. What? Please tell us. Here's your baseball bat. ^{1s} Um. Or choose your weapon. Whatever you're comfortable with, whatever is suitable, um, current news item making. You see, it has to be, um, that MP talking about, um, you know, Muslims taking over. Yeah, just taking over. I just wish we could leave people's religions alone. Their sanctity in faith and hope and the things we deeply believe. And if I'm ever going to have an issue with anybody, it's not going to be based on their religion, you know, because that is meant to be our safe space where we can dream of something better than what we are currently experiencing. In reality, that's usually the basis of a lot of religions across the board. But there's, you know, this specific religion. If we're talking about Islam, it's just interesting how it's vilified time and time again, and it seems like it's absolutely okay for people to do. I'm not Muslim by enrages me because I'm just like, leave people alone because what it does is that it then makes like the average Muslim girl in her hijab, that if she's out there, it makes her a target for hate. It makes like it's scary to me that we're not practicing what we might practice with other protected characteristics in terms of maybe even Christianity. I think she would never let fly if you were saying it about Christians. But somehow it's okay to say that Islam and also even my mom, a lapsed Muslim of many years, it made her cry about this guy, she said. Because it was, you know, it's the kind of it's the Houses of Parliament for my mother, you know, it's something that she holds. You know, in up here. And she was she was really upset by what this guy said she was, which was very unlike my mom. But it just goes to show that when we are having those sorts of discussions and you're doing it in Parliament, that can easily become law. We are having all these bills just flying across and we're like, that's a problem. That's a problem. I think about even what they like to term inhumanely as the small boats, as if there aren't people in those boats. And where are they trying to come over from? What are they trying to escape? Britain is not that cute. I'm so sorry. As a British citizen, Britain is not that cute. People are coming here out of desperation. Isn't because you know, the streets are paved with gold or anything like that. So there has to be a way for us to function in order to welcome people, especially if our government has a hand in why they're being displaced in the first place, because we never finish the story. I think that the thing with Britain is because a lot of the depravity that was kind of committed in Britain's name was outsourced. It was done in other places, you know, in the colonies, the average British, British person might not realize the extent to

which, you know, we're soaked in blood. Yeah. And realize exactly. And doesn't link today situations to 50 years ago, to a hundred years ago to 200 years ago, there were no clean stops. No, India did not become independent. And it was the end. It had been ransacked. It had been, you know, a man drew a straight line down and to partition. Yeah. I mean a straight line and a straight line and then. Yeah. So this isn't over like that. There's no clean outcome to any of this. This is messy and gruesome and gross and continues to be. When I learned the other day, uh, that Britain had 804 concentration camps in Kenya, why didn't I said, wow. ^{Is} Wow. You know, because when we think about concentration camps, we don't think about Britain and we do not think about Kenya. And so I had no idea. We think that there's nothing new under the sun. And what are we doing as a collective? What are we doing are the only way that we can save ourselves, because nobody's coming to save us is to be able to kind of take each, you know, stories that seem disparate, bring them together, see the interconnectedness of all of our experiences, really see each other, create a safe space for us to feel the rage, the anger that we need to feel as a result of this and then say, so how are we going to use this to create something better for us all? Because this is not working. This is where I think I know God. Look at our rage. Room is collapse. Let it collapse, let it collapse. Anyone, if anyone's gonna let it collapse like let you go, let it collapse. So talk about this. Forget the rage room because. Yeah, it's. I think that takes you back to your book again, actually. Is this circularity is that if this is going to be me, if your words can be used for change, then then waiting and seeing how it all fits together in these larger ways is so powerful. It has to be like, I'm always scared of people who are just like, it's just about me and my people, and I only care about me. And so, you know, I would get that, um, you know, my, um, you know, my son's dad and I are now going through a divorce, but that is one of the most important people still in my life, because through him, I was able to learn that for 125 years, like, Poland wasn't recognized as Poland because of Russia. So if somebody else is going to know what it feels like in the white sense to be colonized, you'll have a pretty good idea where you can't your your language that, you know, in terms of Polish isn't what you're allowed to speak. You must speak Russian first, right? And so then means that it takes me out of my immediate experience where I'm like, well, as a Nigerian, we went through this and it's only now, you know, I have to care. It matters. It matters. You know what? Everybody else has experience. It doesn't take away from me to listen and be like, oh, I think that we might have a kind of interwoven dynamic here of oppression. And can we kind of follow the thread who's at the end of the thread when we get there? Yeah. Yeah. And, and also this is our jigsaw puzzle, isn't it. Like, you know, like this is how we work out. Like where we all fit do or do we fit. And that's fine if we don't fit. Okay. Whatever. But like let's work as humanity globally. How do we move forward? I've got to hear what your experience is. Even if I think, no, that can't be true, well then tell me more. So actually stand and James Baldwin even even said, you know, like you think that your heartbreak or the things that you're going through is the only thing, and then you read a book and like, there are you. It's like the universality of. Heartbreak, of pain, of suffering. It shouldn't be what connects us. Empathize with other people because you understand. Oh, it's like my thing. It's like when this happened to me. Because what's the point if it's not about connecting and about moving? Are we doing a better way? Yeah. What are we doing this. And also, look, I am so aware we are not on this earth for long. We are right. We are just passing through so, so quickly. So, so coming back to what I said at the very beginning, let's hurry this up. Like, let's forget. Let's forget the small talk. Let's forget all these, like little tiny little bits and pieces, like, let's say, all the uncomfortable, messy stuff so that we leave this earth having shifted something having changed, or it's just not there's nothing else. It's not, it's not. There isn't much else outside of, like, seeing each other and loving each other. That is important. And love is to doing right. Love in and of itself is radical. So it's not love where you kind of sitting there and watching other people like on the ropes, getting beaten up by life, like your love will demand of you to do something, to say something, to try to shift it right. And it's a force. It's a force.

Whereas people try to steal the power away from love by talking about it like it's this passive thing that it doesn't do anything. Oh, I just love them. And love is what fixes things. Not hey, no, sometimes love might mean that I have to fuck up your gaff. That's the inverse of it, isn't it? The anger doesn't have to be a negative if you can be part of that love. Love? Yes, yes, yes. Um, yeah. We better let you go, actually, because we could talk. I could talk to you ever. This has been the absolute best conversation. Yeah. You're genuinely. You could talk. 4s Thank you for listening and sharing in our anger. 1s And remember, you're not mad to feel mad. 3s Please like and subscribe. It helps other people find the podcast.