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Black Feminism and Me/Maine Webinar

University of Maine Alumni Association

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00:04
so welcome to black feminism and me
00:07
slash maine
00:09
before i formally introduce and address
00:11
the intention of tonight's event
00:14
i want to start with a call to action
00:16
and perhaps this is something you have
00:18
already deeply considered
00:20
but if not i would like to encourage
00:22
everyone to reflect on the land with
00:25
which your memories and your being has
00:28
been
00:28
and is being developed on
00:31
specifically i implore you to
00:32
acknowledge those lives that have
00:34
cultivated and developed a deep
00:36
connection and practice with mother
00:38
earth
00:39
the university of maine located on marsh
00:42
island is the homeland of the penobscot
00:44
nation
00:45
the indigenous people who continue to
00:47
tend to and fight for the rights of the
00:50
land and river

00:53

i want to take a moment to honor the

00:54

members of the penobscot nation in the

00:57

state of maine and the nanticoke lenape

01:00

nation of new jersey where i am

01:02

currently

01:03

whose generations of life love

01:05

resistance perseverance i recognize and

01:09

support

01:10

i benefit and reside on this land that

01:13

gave me opportunity to have memories and

01:15

experience my own growth from the soil

01:18

that the indigenous people expertly

01:20

tended for more than my brain for more

01:23

time than my brain can comprehend

01:25

and i want to call to attention the

01:27

complexities of knowing and existing

01:30

with this reality

01:32

i encourage the audience to learn more

01:34

about their local indigenous communities

01:37

histories

01:40

bell hooks famously said quote when we

01:43

drop fear we can draw nearer to people

01:46

we can draw nearer to the earth

01:49
we can draw nearer to all the heavenly
01:51
creatures that surround us
01:53
and tonight i have the pleasure of
01:55
facilitating this roundtable dialogue
01:57
with five heavenly women i am honored to
02:00
have connected with during my time in
02:02
maine
02:03
amara ephesia who is the director of
02:06
youth engagement and policy of the maine
02:08
environmental education association
02:11
and a national geographic young explorer
02:14
kosia feige youth hub coordinator for
02:16
the maine environmental education
02:18
association
02:20
dr laurie banks assistant professor of
02:23
biology at bates college
02:26
dr sama of durakeeb associate director
02:29
of the maine humanities council
02:31
and dr leslie hill professor emeritus of
02:35
politics at bates college
02:38
over the course of the semester
02:40
i've had the privilege of inviting you
02:43
all to speak with me on a podcast

02:44
project that will be released very soon
02:47
called black feminism and me slash maine
02:50
where we collectively covered a broad
02:52
spectrum of topics such as
02:54
intersectional black feminism
02:56
nature
02:57
youth activism
02:59
and stem as they pertain to black
03:01
feminist ways of knowing and being
03:05
tonight's dialogue is an opportunity to
03:07
once again have a platform to center and
03:10
uplift the voices of black feminists
03:14
for those of you who may not know this
03:15
tonight's event and the associated
03:17
podcasts are so are connected to a
03:20
university of maine class offered this
03:22
semester
03:23
called black feminist thought and
03:25
expression
03:26
and i want to extend a special welcome
03:29
to the students of this class as well as
03:31
my co-instructors dr liliana harakova
03:34
and mr kevin roberge i see you both it's

03:37

good to see you

03:39

i would like to take the time to address

03:41

the folks watching this to say thank you

03:43

for bearing witness to us

03:45

whether it's in this zoom webinar

03:47

tonight or once this recording is

03:48

published we are grateful for your

03:50

compassionate listening as we unpack our

03:53

individual understanding

03:55

and personal connection to black

03:56

feminism

03:58

before we jump into the questions

04:01

does anyone feel called to say a few

04:03

words before we open the dialogue any

04:05

one of the panelists specifically

04:12

looks like

04:14

i'm just really excited thank you lauren

04:17

um

04:18

for inviting us i'm just really excited

04:20

to have this conversation i know we have

04:22

a set number of questions but i just

04:24

know that conversation is just going to

04:26

flourish from there so

04:28
i'm excited about tonight yeah me too
04:31
absolutely okay well let's let's get
04:34
into our first
04:35
our first facilitation question so
04:38
what was your path to and through black
04:41
feminism both thinking and doing and how
04:45
does it relate to your experience
04:48
and i'm going to throw it to simma first
04:54
um
04:55
how to go first thank you so i love this
04:58
question because i i always
05:01
love like an origin story um and i feel
05:04
like that's what this question is and so
05:05
i think um you know if i had to
05:08
cite like a a human being
05:12
close to me i would have to
05:14
cite my mother who raised me
05:17
and she um
05:18
and she never talked about black
05:20
feminism in any kind of like
05:23
um explicit way i grew up in a house
05:25
where we talked about black politics and
05:27
black people all the time but my mother

05:29
was not someone who said oh i am a
05:31
feminist i am a black feminist but it
05:34
she um
05:36
i guess i would say that she
05:39
brought me to black feminism just
05:41
by example and by her from her
05:45
the expectations that she set for me and
05:47
the path that she that she imagined me
05:50
walking on and um
05:53
and all of the
05:55
literature that she
05:58
introduced me to and so if i were to
06:00
cite like a
06:01
like a
06:02
a
06:04
people or
06:05
uh black feminists who are not you know
06:07
who who who shape my first learning i
06:10
guess i would say
06:11
literature um black writers black women
06:14
writers who shaped my imagination so i
06:17
grew up reading a lot of virginia
06:19
hamilton which um

06:22

really

06:23

um

06:26

all of her writing really helped me

06:28

think differently about

06:30

just about

06:32

speculative writing

06:34

um and the place of black folks

06:38

in the present and the future and

06:41

all of you know magical capabilities um

06:44

and then i think about the black

06:46

feminists who shape my identity people

06:48

like

06:49

audrey lord who i talk about all the

06:51

time i will not

06:52

delve into audrey lord right at the

06:53

moment but then the black feminists um

06:56

the black women

06:58

um

06:59

who shaped my politics like angela davis

07:03

and bell hooks and june jordan

07:05

so i think um

07:08

those are the those are the that's where

07:09

i that's where like my root my black

07:11
feminist root that's where it comes from
07:18
sorry technical issue thank you so much
07:20
and it also reminded me of the fact that
07:22
i know everyone um in this room tonight
07:25
is going to ask
07:26
if we can give a list of like
07:28
recommended reading and people and so
07:30
i'm keeping notes
07:32
for that inevitable question that always
07:34
comes up um and i want to throw it to
07:37
cosy next
07:39
to to respond
07:42
yeah
07:43
so um i guess for me
07:45
um
07:46
i've just kind of always been around
07:50
super cool and inspirational black women
07:53
in my life
07:54
um
07:56
as a um coming from
07:59
you know a big group of
08:01
nigerian-american immigrants
08:03
um just seeing

08:05
the
08:06
um black women in my life just
08:10
do everything that they can
08:12
to
08:14
establish themselves and to make
08:16
themselves seen and heard in a place and
08:20
an environment that does not want them
08:22
to be seen and heard
08:24
and you know doing so
08:26
successfully
08:28
it was always really inspiring to me and
08:30
so
08:31
you know even
08:32
without being conscious of that label of
08:35
being a black feminist
08:37
i still understood
08:40
and you know emulated the actions
08:43
and the mindsets of the women around me
08:46
so yeah that's what i would have to say
08:50
and that sounds like a very dynamic
08:53
introduction and experience because you
08:56
know not every obvious i i hate that i
08:58
even have to say this but not every

09:00
black woman is the same we don't all
09:02
think alike we all have different
09:04
nuances
09:06
that are to be celebrated and to be
09:09
cherished and i could
09:11
i feel that and i feel like just by
09:13
knowing you i see the multiplicity of
09:16
you know your sister's influence and you
09:19
know maybe some of your aunts and things
09:21
like that and
09:22
it's just really um it's really
09:24
beautiful to to call do that and
09:27
acknowledge that really
09:28
um so lori
09:30
dr banks
09:32
sorry yeah
09:34
so um oh can you guys see me there we go
09:37
okay
09:38
um
09:39
my first best friends were my paternal
09:43
grandmother who was originally from
09:46
celebrant alabama it's on the state line
09:49
of alabama and mississippi

09:51
and her sisters and her
09:55
sisters-in-laws my my grandfather's
09:57
sisters
09:59
and
10:00
so i
10:01
came into
10:02
this sort of pre-existing sisterhood if
10:06
you will
10:07
um when they were all in their late 50s
10:10
and early 60s which
10:12
i think is
10:14
in sort of a magical point in a black
10:17
woman's life where like all your cares
10:19
go away
10:21
your respect for other people's
10:23
expectations are gone
10:26
and all of those things
10:28
um and so having them you know in my
10:31
life very early
10:33
uh and being you know really
10:35
good examples of resilience um and
10:40
really
10:41
kind of you know given it to people when

10:44
they tried to impose their expectations
10:46
on these women and the women being like
10:48
not today satan
10:50
um
10:51
definitely had a huge impact on me
10:54
um
10:55
not just because they were fabulous in
10:58
the kitchen where which is where my
10:59
biochemistry training started
11:02
um you know but also realizing that as i
11:06
encountered the world in my body with my
11:09
hair and my skin and my curves and all
11:12
of these things
11:13
that i really had a choice as to whether
11:15
i was going to
11:17
pay attention to other people's
11:19
expectations of who they thought i
11:20
should be or not um and so
11:23
thankfully
11:24
you know through these wonderful
11:25
examples of these women
11:28
um i really obviously took the latter
11:31
past where it was like you know my

11:35
beauty my genius whatever it is that i
11:37
feel like god has imparted me with um
11:40
doesn't really require
11:42
your permission um and it doesn't
11:44
require your understanding either
11:46
because that's between me and him we got
11:48
stuff to do
11:49
um and so i have to say that's number
11:52
one where it started
11:53
um but i'm really grateful for that that
11:56
i had that example of these women who
11:59
had the lived experience
12:01
um to really
12:03
walk that in a way
12:05
that you know in in some of the days
12:07
that they experienced it wasn't super
12:10
easy right
12:11
um but to pass on to me like look
12:15
we have fought these battles
12:17
so that you would have different kinds
12:18
of opportunities
12:20
and especially because you have these
12:22
opportunities now we need you to go out

12:24
there and you know kick some doors down
12:27
so um that was where it started yeah
12:30
northern alabama
12:32
going down there for um summer vacation
12:36
uh since i was raised in seattle um
12:40
but yeah um you know at lots of kitchen
12:43
tables
12:44
learning you know the black feminist
12:46
version of global domination and it
12:48
followed me
12:54
okay i don't know how long
12:56
the awkward silence lasted but i just
13:00
got the my internet is unstable which
13:03
just reminds me that
13:05
internet
13:07
access to water having a computer these
13:09
are all privileges
13:11
and mult other things as well so i just
13:14
just tying that in there connectivity
13:16
issues
13:17
um our
13:19
first world problems
13:21
so

13:23
thank you dr banks for bringing us a
13:26
back
13:27
to a sense of um place in the south
13:30
where you grew up
13:32
um
13:33
and
13:34
also talking about how you know
13:38
you're
13:39
instantly connected to your family who
13:42
also help you connect
13:43
um to your ancestors and really give you
13:46
the strength to persevere
13:49
at any point in time right
13:52
so amara you are
13:55
my next
13:56
my next person
14:10
okay amara can
14:12
is having an issue on muting her oh
14:14
there we go there we go awesome sorry
14:16
about that
14:17
um let's see firstly thank you everyone
14:19
so much for for sharing your stories
14:21
your origin stories um i'm just

14:24
i know my face is going to be hurting at
14:25
the end of this night as i smile um so
14:28
i'm yeah i'm just so excited and looking
14:31
forward to the rest of this conversation
14:33
um as far as my origin stories my path
14:36
to and through black feminism goes
14:39
um as my sister mentioned i am
14:42
incredibly grateful that i had the
14:43
opportunity to
14:45
be surrounded by really
14:48
incredible
14:49
black women who were unapologetically
14:52
and are upon apologetically themselves
14:55
in all that they do who really served as
14:58
a source for inspiration for me
15:01
especially in my most formative years
15:04
before i was nine
15:06
and then when i was nine i moved to
15:08
maine and that was a very different
15:11
experience because a lot of these women
15:13
who i
15:14
had in community
15:17
they were several hundreds of miles away

15:19
and
15:20
um
15:21
starting from age nine through
15:24
i would say just about
15:26
my
15:27
my years of high school so just a few
15:29
years ago
15:31
those times were pretty tough as i was
15:33
growing into myself
15:35
and it felt like really for me
15:38
a rediscovery of black feminism
15:42
because although i still had folks in my
15:44
corner i had less of those folks
15:47
and i didn't really see
15:50
these
15:52
i didn't really see this embodied in the
15:54
field or the passions that i wanted to
15:57
pursue so i kind of had to rediscover on
16:00
my own
16:01
you know who
16:03
are those folks that i could look to
16:05
turn to who can
16:07
be a source of inspiration in

16:10
this work that looks like and has always
16:13
continued to have
16:14
a single narrative a lot of these
16:18
passions that
16:19
i i had
16:21
and so
16:22
in my rediscovery of black feminism
16:26
in my middle school and high school
16:28
years
16:30
i was so grateful to always have my
16:32
mother as a constant
16:35
i don't think i can articulate in words
16:37
the
16:38
uh just the profound impact my mom has
16:40
had on me the sacrifices that she's made
16:44
um and her being
16:46
the embodiment of
16:49
what she hoped that
16:51
my sister and i would
16:53
pursue
16:55
to follow your passions irrespective of
16:57
whatever barriers
16:59
society says that you have

17:01
and
17:02
also recognizing that you're the only
17:04
person who can name your barriers um and
17:07
if you name none you truly have none
17:09
and she really embodied that so much and
17:11
i'm so grateful to her for that
17:14
um another person i really just so
17:18
looked up to who
17:19
um
17:21
i guess i attribute to my rediscovery of
17:24
black feminism is um councilwoman angela
17:27
okafor
17:28
who is a counselor in
17:31
bangor
17:32
and a really close family friend who
17:35
has taught me that
17:37
being the jack of all trades is
17:40
um
17:41
it's definitely something that is very
17:43
difficult
17:45
but it's also really amazing to be able
17:48
to pursue uh multiple endeavors and that
17:51
black women should not silo themselves

17:53
to one area of advocacy or one hobby or
17:57
one passion that we are allowed to and
17:59
we have the right to pursue multiple
18:01
interests and passions
18:03
um as anyone should
18:07
when it comes to policy and specific
18:09
scientific policy
18:11
i'm grateful for ayanna elizabeth
18:13
johnson who is
18:15
one of the leaders the forefront leaders
18:18
in the climate women in the climate
18:20
movement
18:21
and who's really inspired me to
18:23
transform my lens from a scientific lens
18:26
to a more social oriented lens when it
18:29
comes to climate generation
18:31
solution generation
18:34
and lastly i um i really thank the black
18:38
women that i have as friends
18:40
who i didn't have opportunities to have
18:43
um
18:44
friends who shared my lived experiences
18:47
before i came to college actually

18:50
um and it's just in these two years that
18:52
i've had these friends that
18:55
it has been so refreshing
18:57
to not have to code switch in
18:59
conversation to actually be able to like
19:02
say how i'm feeling um and people
19:05
understand because they're going through
19:06
the same thing i can share my passions
19:09
and it doesn't have to be this is my
19:11
struggle because of something i can just
19:13
say this is my struggle and they
19:15
understand it um so i'm so grateful for
19:18
for all of these women
19:20
uh for
19:21
um being a part of my origin story when
19:23
it comes to my journey with black
19:25
feminism
19:27
thank you amara every time
19:30
you answer a question i'm like oh my
19:32
gosh you're so eloquent like i can't
19:35
i'm like
19:37
it's so
19:38
clear like i wish my brain worked like

19:40
that and you mentioned you're gonna be
19:42
smiling through this whole thing i'm
19:43
gonna be like trying to not cry and
19:46
smile and like
19:47
just forget everything because i'm so
19:49
emotionally
19:51
tethered to all of you
19:53
this evening
19:55
i did want to just highlight something
19:57
that you said that really sticks out to
19:59
me as we think and talk about black
20:01
feminism you know it's more than just
20:05
the theory that comes from incredible
20:08
black women who spend you know their
20:10
entire lives writing
20:12
and
20:14
allowing other people to connect
20:16
to their experiences
20:18
they meaning the other person and also
20:20
they themselves um
20:22
and i just want to draw attention to so
20:24
many people who you've named that are
20:27
both scholars and

20:29
also
20:30
um
20:31
just
20:32
a black woman existing
20:34
that
20:35
is already enough to be in this tribe of
20:39
black feminists black feminism excuse me
20:43
um and so
20:44
dr hill you're
20:47
you're the last
20:48
um and but not the least
20:50
person to respond um to this first
20:54
question
20:56
thank you lauren and um
20:59
i like other as others have said i
21:02
appreciate the the stories i'm hearing
21:05
what i'm getting is a way
21:08
are the
21:09
a way to think about the multiple paths
21:11
through which we've come to
21:13
our thinking about black feminism
21:16
i hear echoes of my own experience and
21:19
some of what others have said but let me

21:21
just say that my path into black
21:23
feminism started with
21:25
reading thinking and talking about black
21:28
women's writing at tony k bombara's
21:31
kitchen table kitchen tables figure very
21:34
prominently i think in the connections
21:36
we have in the learning
21:38
that we've done
21:40
fiction essays and poetry by alice
21:43
walker tony k tony morrison audrey lord
21:46
bell hooks barbara smith gloria and
21:48
zelda and tazaki shange and the kambahi
21:51
river collective part of the early
21:56
kind of uh
21:58
awakening
21:59
opening of my head to thinking about
22:03
black women's experiences their presence
22:06
in the world and
22:08
the the particular
22:11
ways in which we understood
22:14
how
22:15
the world operated and how power
22:17
operated

22:19
those 1980s conversations were my own
22:21
adult version of the kinds of kitchen
22:24
table talk i had witnessed as a kid
22:27
among women in my family and in my
22:29
mother's conversations with her friends
22:32
confidants women i called my aunts
22:36
often these four mothers were
22:38
intentionally or not
22:40
um passing on stories of being a woman
22:43
in their world being
22:45
good mothers and wives surviving work
22:48
and whatever the world threw at them
22:51
and of course being healthy
22:55
often the lessons were about taking care
22:57
of self
22:58
of uplifting the race
23:01
and protecting the family indeed what i
23:04
think now of as the patriarchal family
23:08
[Music]
23:10
later i found theorizing by kimberly
23:12
credshop jersey hill collins and black
23:15
south african women activists
23:19
legal scholars like patricia williams of

23:22
scholar activists angela davis kathy
23:25
cohen polygon allen
23:27
chandra mohanty margo okazawa ray and
23:30
amina mama
23:32
their accounts and analyses developed my
23:34
own feminist perspectives
23:36
and ideas about black feminism about
23:39
intersectionality about global feminism
23:43
and ways of being in the world
23:46
and enacting a black feminist politics
23:49
in our interpersonal relationships in
23:52
our communities and in our world
23:55
so lots of ideas coming at me processing
23:58
things trying to figure things out for
23:59
myself and as i thought about this
24:02
question about path it occurred to me to
24:05
point out a couple of things that stand
24:07
out and one is that
24:10
there's an ongoing process
24:12
of of the development of black feminists
24:15
developing black feminist thought
24:19
and for each of us and for us
24:21
together

24:23
uh growing into our black feminist
24:25
perspectives
24:27
there's an ongoing process of learning
24:29
to claim
24:30
and to honor our womanhood as we engage
24:33
in anti-racist struggles
24:37
the thing that stands out i recall very
24:39
vividly when i first entered
24:41
graduate school angela davis came to my
24:44
campus at atlanta university and
24:46
declared very publicly that she was not
24:49
a feminist
24:50
and look at where she is now
24:53
so
24:54
so you know the it's okay
24:57
to think and and and and to interact and
25:02
you know call ourselves out on various
25:05
kinds of things
25:06
the other thing that comes forward is uh
25:09
from from all of those experiences that
25:11
i had the thinking the talking the
25:14
interacting the activism
25:16
was the

25:17
were the fundamental
25:19
conceptual
25:21
linkages the symbolic linkages and word
25:23
and cultural images and the everyday
25:26
practical linkages
25:28
between racism economic exploitation
25:32
and gender
25:33
sexism and heterosexist depression
25:36
that they're there in many ways one can
25:38
see reflections
25:40
of of those whether we're focused on one
25:44
of those isms or another
25:47
the the other thing about my path is
25:50
that a lot of
25:52
the thinking the reading came of course
25:54
because of activism
25:56
some of it was electoral campaigns
26:00
the anti-apartheid solidarity movement
26:02
was very
26:03
important to me
26:06
co-convening anti-racist feminist
26:08
workshops in charlotte north carolina
26:11
finding

26:14
fellow learners until i entered
26:17
an interdisciplinary undergraduate
26:20
program a graduate program where i was
26:22
encouraged to make race and gender
26:25
politics
26:26
the subject of inquiry for my for my own
26:29
scholarship and learning
26:32
so
26:33
um
26:35
reading
26:37
thinking talking doing
26:39
and
26:40
um
26:42
all of that
26:43
involved bringing a a blackened
26:45
intersectional feminist lens to the
26:48
tasks i encounter to the institutions
26:50
that i've worked in
26:55
and as it relates to my experience
26:57
black feminism helps me make sense of
27:00
the world how power is distributed
27:03
how it's reproduced
27:05
how it is or can be challenged in the

27:07
world i saw women doing it i saw women
27:11
make envisioning how to do it and it
27:14
offers me space and guidance for
27:15
thinking about my own ways to respond to
27:18
it
27:23
you always leave me speechless it's like
27:26
i
27:28
i just i don't eat i
27:30
uh there's too much going on in my brain
27:32
right now but
27:34
i just
27:35
really want to
27:38
say that i personally feel
27:41
feel the words
27:42
and can the way you've described your
27:45
your journey and your path was just very
27:48
vivid um
27:50
and also steeped like with some of the
27:52
giants of
27:54
um
27:55
of you know the revolution
27:58
and
28:00
i i wish i wish i could have

28:04

i mean i wish i was 50 i guess is what

28:06

i'm saying at that age in my life

28:09

where i'm at my peak

28:11

um

28:13

yeah so thank you thank you dr hill

28:16

okay so our next question um

28:19

is how does identifying as a black

28:22

feminist

28:24

play out in your actions and choices

28:27

i've definitely

28:28

as dr hill has been pointing out have

28:30

heard a lot of

28:33

echoes of connecting to mothering

28:37

connecting to that community

28:39

connecting to scholars in the words of

28:42

black women um

28:44

and so as i think about

28:47

actions and choices

28:49

um

28:50

it reminds me of the ways in which and

28:52

this is just a personal anecdote as i

28:55

get older i grow into being a version of

28:58

my mother

28:59

um

29:00

and closer to her and more understanding

29:03

of her than i was

29:05

when i was say like 16 right

29:09

that's just my own personal connection

29:11

to this question but

29:13

again

29:14

that we don't have to go down the rabbit

29:16

hole of motherhood or mothering

29:19

but um does anyone want to start by

29:22

talking about how they identify

29:25

um as a black feminist in their actions

29:27

and choices

29:31

yeah

29:32

i'll be brave and start

29:34

um

29:35

so i would say for me

29:37

um black feminism has kind of shaped my

29:40

mindset just the way that i feel the

29:42

world in terms of

29:45

both gender and race and so for me

29:48

understanding the fact that

29:50

um

29:51
because
29:52
black people are seen as the antithesis
29:55
of white people
29:57
black women
29:58
um especially are viewed
30:01
as
30:02
not feminine or unable to be feminine
30:05
because the fact that white women are
30:07
seen as the epitome of femininity
30:10
and because of that
30:12
you know
30:13
you know growing up i kind of did
30:15
struggle with
30:17
understanding my place as
30:20
a woman a black woman but
30:22
i've come to realize of recently that
30:25
because those systems weren't created
30:28
for me
30:29
then i
30:30
don't
30:31
need to
30:33
even
30:34
abide by them i don't need to listen to

30:36
them i don't
30:38
i can
30:39
disassociate myself with those systems
30:42
because they're not for me so if they're
30:44
not for me
30:46
why would i abide by them
30:47
and so that mindset is just
30:50
kind of where
30:51
you know my actions my choices the way
30:53
that i identify
30:55
you know where that has led me
30:57
so i guess for me that's just a
31:00
brief overview
31:03
oh thank you i instantly as you were
31:05
talking was thinking about
31:07
um
31:08
hair
31:09
right and the politics of hair
31:11
um let alone
31:14
the rest of our phenotypes that
31:17
are now being emulated
31:19
in popular culture um
31:23
but yeah it's

31:26

i like i like that outlook it's more

31:28

hopeful

31:29

it's more hopeful than i feel like i am

31:32

on some of my days where i too struggle

31:35

um

31:37

with

31:38

eurocentric

31:40

standards of beauty so thank you for

31:42

that

31:48

yeah

31:49

it's just so oh i don't know if i'm kind

31:50

of well i'm just going to stay off mute

31:52

now because affirming mouth noises

31:55

i've been making them but i'm on mute

31:56

but cozy what you said is so

31:59

um i just imagine that must have been

32:01

like a powerful

32:03

set of moments for you

32:05

to like recognize that

32:07

that

32:09

that all of those systems and all of

32:11

those standards that exist like

32:15

you know that they don't need to we

32:16
don't need to map them on to our lives
32:19
and there are you know there's like a
32:20
whole
32:21
line
32:22
lineage of
32:24
people
32:25
before us
32:26
who have their own systems and standards
32:28
so i just think that i imagine that must
32:30
be very powerful
32:32
um
32:34
so
32:35
this question i feel like it can just
32:37
like keep unfolding unfolding but one of
32:39
the one of the ways that my
32:42
that
32:44
black feminism shapes my actions and my
32:46
thinking is that it it
32:49
it helps me
32:50
not
32:52
leave any part of myself behind
32:55
right so
32:56
um

32:58

so

32:58

it gave it gives me an opportunity to to

33:02

to

33:03

bring my whole self all my identities to

33:06

whatever the whatever the

33:08

the issue is that i'm working on or

33:10

talking about

33:12

or advocating for

33:14

um

33:15

and

33:16

um

33:18

i think it it was i think it was i'm

33:21

terrible with quoting people but i

33:22

believe audre lorde said something

33:25

something to to the effect of you know

33:27

that um

33:28

that there is no such thing as a

33:30

single-issue struggle because we don't

33:32

lead single-issue lives and i see her as

33:34

talking about black black women are just

33:37

like taking the idea of black feminism

33:39

black folks just in general just taking

33:40

the idea of black feminism and

33:42
recognizing that whatever whatever um
33:46
the particular
33:48
um issue is that is activating
33:51
mainstream feminism
33:53
is inevitably inevitably going to be
33:55
look different
33:57
from the perspective
33:59
of a black feminist or a black woman or
34:01
a black person
34:03
and so i just so one of the things that
34:06
black feminism does is just broaden my
34:07
thinking and allow me to
34:10
to
34:11
to bring
34:12
all of my different perspectives to
34:13
whatever whatever the issue is
34:15
and now i'm going to stay off mute
34:21
dr banks it looked like you were also
34:23
okay yeah
34:25
so it just uh spoke to me i will say um
34:29
you know where this conversation is
34:30
going now with this question
34:32
um because i oddly enough was having

34:36
similar thoughts right um so small back
34:39
story on this couple months ago
34:41
i have a research laboratory uh that i
34:44
run here at bates uh in addition to my
34:47
regular teaching duties
34:49
um and
34:50
covid related stuff
34:52
um my productivity had gone down because
34:55
a number of students had to quarantine
34:57
and such right so if you don't have
35:00
anybody working in the lab the
35:01
experiments just don't get done
35:04
uh and so a really really really good
35:06
girlfriend of mine um that i went to
35:09
graduate school with
35:10
um
35:12
just inboxed me and was like i feel like
35:15
this is a cry for help i've been trying
35:17
to get back in the lab anyway
35:19
if i come up there for a week can we
35:22
just hash it out like we were in grad
35:23
school again
35:25
and get these experiments done so she

35:27
flew from houston
35:29
to maine and was like as long as you
35:31
feed me while i'm here and i got
35:33
somewhere to lay down
35:35
let's get in this lab and drink this
35:37
coffee and we can get it done
35:40
and so in this fabulous experience of
35:43
she and i so of course we are children
35:45
of the late 90s right
35:48
we are in the lab there's no students
35:50
present so we have all of the
35:53
little john and the eastside boys ti
35:56
playing in the lab and all of this
35:58
because it's me and keisha right it's
36:00
her name
36:01
um and so in this
36:04
glorious moment of us
36:06
feeling ourselves and feeling our
36:09
science
36:10
she said the most striking thing to me
36:12
and i just have not let this go yet
36:15
that
36:16
had graduate school been like this we

36:19
would not have had the struggles that we
36:21
had
36:22
and took it a step further and was like
36:24
who could we be and what could we
36:27
accomplish
36:28
if nobody was paying attention to our
36:30
hair
36:31
or the colloquial english that we used
36:35
or our skin tone or the food that we eat
36:39
with the music that we listen to and
36:41
telling us that we should be somebody
36:43
else
36:44
if we could just concentrate on the work
36:47
like what could we get done
36:49
and so
36:50
um that just obviously was incredibly
36:53
profound with keisha to say that
36:56
um
36:57
but i have sort of taken that as
37:00
you know in this moment particularly for
37:04
she and i who are in our late 30s early
37:06
40s right um in these really interesting
37:10
points in our career where we're done

37:12
with our training
37:14
and we're you know starting to make the
37:15
boss moves and stuff
37:17
what are ways that we can sort of
37:20
inject this black girl magic into
37:24
the universe
37:25
so that we are creating these
37:28
environments and creating these spaces
37:30
where people have just the freedom to be
37:33
the way that they are
37:34
and if trap music helps you concentrate
37:38
better than bach
37:39
then go concentrate and do what you need
37:41
to do
37:42
um
37:43
but you know in
37:45
creating these spaces in environments
37:48
where people can just be themselves
37:51
and do whatever flows out of them in
37:54
those moments
37:56
um and so it's really neat to be
37:59
at this point where i have the ability
38:00
to create those spaces in my laboratory

38:03
in my classroom or in some of the other
38:05
advisory things i do outside of the the
38:08
college
38:09
um
38:10
to really
38:11
give other people now the permission
38:14
to be themselves um and so while it
38:18
seems to be incredibly important for the
38:20
people that i advise who are other
38:22
younger black women
38:23
it's amazing how like shielded everybody
38:26
else also feels
38:28
um
38:29
you know in trying to
38:31
fit into this box where it's like
38:34
you weren't intended to be in a box you
38:35
were intended to do whatever it was you
38:37
were created to do
38:39
um and so it's really been interesting
38:42
and fun
38:43
to be at a stage where i can just make
38:46
that happen or at least give other
38:48
people

38:49
the perception that they can do that and
38:51
like they're allowed to so
38:54
yeah it's it's fun at this part
38:57
say lori dr banks never in my life have
39:00
i heard anyone say feeling feeling my
39:03
science
39:06
never in my life but
39:08
now now i have and i will probably never
39:11
have to use it but i hope maybe one day
39:14
i might be able to
39:17
well i'm hanging on to black injecting
39:20
black girl magic into the world i love
39:23
that
39:24
um but it also reminds me of something
39:27
loretta ross said here
39:29
uh in maine um
39:32
a couple of years ago at a at a
39:35
maine women's policy center conference
39:36
she talked about
39:38
she talked about one of the radical
39:41
healing
39:42
uh and i'm that's that's the term and
39:44
i've i've heard recently but but

39:47
she was talking about envisioning and
39:49
advocating for a world
39:52
in which
39:53
uh individual well-being
39:56
as and
39:57
it comes from creating the kinds of
40:00
social and natural environments
40:03
that support
40:05
everybody's survival and ability to
40:08
thrive she talked about you know this
40:11
whole concept of healing justice
40:14
where what we pursue
40:17
and what we do in the world is about
40:21
bringing healing and if that means
40:23
injecting black girl magic in
40:26
into viral biology dr banks
40:31
hey i'm all for it it's uh it's it's
40:34
wonderful to hear you talk about it and
40:37
it also makes me think that that here's
40:40
here's an example of something that i
40:42
think goes on in black feminism and that
40:45
is that on a on a personal level like
40:48
for me it nudges me in the direction of

40:50
claiming myself
40:52
claiming my own knowledge claiming my
40:54
own skills and abilities and and and
40:58
who i want to be in the world and doing
41:00
what i need to do to be well and thrive
41:03
so it means playing your music shutting
41:05
out the world
41:07
in order to
41:09
to be to
41:10
do
41:11
do the things that that are important to
41:13
me to do
41:14
it's also it reminds me of uh
41:19
well black feminism it just
41:22
what what you're talking about
41:24
is is putting
41:26
black women in the world
41:29
in a way that says we're fully human
41:32
and can make those kinds of
41:33
contributions to to the world i love it
41:36
thank you thank you so much
41:53
yeah we're on standby silence is healthy
41:56
too

41:57

you know okay so i am gonna stay off of

42:00

me

42:00

um for the rest of the conversation so

42:02

that doesn't happen again

42:04

um oh my goodness i have the jettors um

42:09

i

42:10

resonate so much with what everyone has

42:12

said um

42:14

and really for me um

42:19

what i feel as though it was embodied in

42:21

especially your response lori was that

42:24

uh the fear of conforming to like

42:26

society's assumptions of me and negative

42:29

perceptions of me as a black woman was

42:32

really holding me back

42:34

it was preventing me in a lot of

42:36

different spaces

42:38

and i would say to some extent because

42:41

my journey my personal journey is ever

42:43

evolving

42:45

to a certain extent not as much as it

42:47

used to it is still preventing me

42:50

but that is something that i'm working

42:51
on that's something that i actively
42:54
track myself on
42:57
especially in
42:58
[Music]
42:59
scientific
43:01
spaces especially in academia
43:04
i was so scared of being
43:08
or conforming to
43:10
that angry black woman trope um i was
43:14
scared that i wouldn't live up to those
43:16
eurocentric ideals uh that you um cosey
43:20
named as well as lauren named
43:22
that
43:23
were literally never meant for me they
43:26
they
43:27
they have nothing to do with me they
43:29
just served as the marker to exclude me
43:32
um in terms of beauty um but you know
43:36
beauty is not something that is one way
43:38
beauty is
43:40
how you carry yourself
43:42
um how you
43:44
the way you walk in the world

43:47
and because i was so scared of these
43:48
assumptions i was so scared of
43:51
conforming to
43:53
these negative perspectives that society
43:55
had of me
43:58
i
43:59
i i really did not allow myself to speak
44:02
up or speak out when i was asked about
44:04
my opinion
44:06
i wouldn't really i would just really
44:08
conform with the masses even though i i
44:10
felt different ways even though i felt
44:12
this was wrong um even though i felt as
44:15
though maybe with some of the
44:16
experiences that i have
44:18
maybe folks shouldn't say this but you
44:21
know i am
44:22
i am as an individual i'm scared of you
44:25
know
44:25
not having friends in a sense because
44:28
they will see me as this angry black
44:30
girl um they'll not want to sit with me
44:32
at lunch and and that was the

44:33
conditioning from a very early age
44:36
i would say probably
44:39
fourth or fifth grade
44:41
that i could just allow people really to
44:44
to violate my personal space uh oh amara
44:48
your hair is so nice i want to touch it
44:50
just and just go ahead and grab it um
44:53
but you know everyone has right to their
44:55
personal space to their personal bubble
44:57
so why should i have mine be violated
45:00
but i didn't say anything again because
45:02
i did not want to conform to these um
45:05
societal perspectives of of black women
45:09
um and it's really in my journey my
45:11
personal journey um that i've realized
45:14
that
45:15
um
45:17
i don't care i really do not care
45:19
um because
45:22
people are always gonna find a way to
45:24
invalidate what i am saying what black
45:26
women are saying um and that is not on
45:28
me that is not

45:30
for me to stop what i am saying it's not
45:33
for me to stop walking the way that i do
45:35
it's not on me to conform it's really on
45:39
those individuals to change their
45:40
perspectives and their mindsets um
45:43
because like anyone
45:45
myself and other black women we have a
45:47
right to express
45:49
our opinions and our perspectives
45:51
without being vilified without being put
45:54
in our place without being put in a box
45:56
um
45:57
[Music]
45:58
so
45:59
really what this has culminated in is
46:02
um myself amara just just being me being
46:07
unapologetically myself uh and it's
46:09
taken some time for me to get here but
46:11
i'm so proud with the progress that i
46:14
have made in just being myself um as
46:16
laurie said just feeling my science or
46:19
feeling my advocacy and my passions and
46:22
and growing in myself and um discovering

46:25
what i love and learn and
46:28
how to especially advocate for what i
46:31
believe
46:32
without again that fear of being
46:34
vilified i think this is what this is
46:37
how black feminism has played in my
46:39
actions
46:41
i guess kind of as as my journey through
46:43
it as well um i would say that that's
46:46
the origin story that i'm kind of i
46:48
guess illustrating for myself with our
46:50
conversation this evening
46:55
it really seems like black feminism is a
46:57
way
46:58
for us
47:00
um
47:00
to articulate what we need
47:03
and for that to be heard
47:06
and listened to and it doesn't have to
47:07
be done in the dark like we don't have
47:09
to just sit if you're in college in your
47:12
dorm room alone like
47:14
struggling thinking

47:17
you know i need community you know and
47:20
and it just for me it brings it
47:24
that point brings it back to the
47:26
university of maine and why it's so
47:28
important to have spaces where
47:32
black people feel like they are enough
47:35
and they don't have to
47:37
suffer in the dark
47:40
and i really
47:42
i'm really grateful that you know we
47:44
have this event just as a testament to
47:47
the fact that we're here in maine right
47:50
and we're thriving in maine um and we're
47:52
carving out our own spaces
47:55
um
47:56
and so that kind of leslie yeah
48:00
finish your sentence oh no no you go
48:02
that's all good
48:05
i was just struck by something amara
48:07
said and i i you know the the
48:10
the statement that people always find a
48:12
way to invalidate me
48:15
people will always find a way to

48:18
um
48:20
try to take the power away from from the
48:23
things that i do it just makes me think
48:26
of how invaluable
48:28
community is
48:30
how invaluable our connections to each
48:33
other are
48:35
and i have to say i was thinking about
48:38
one of these questions about
48:40
what lauren just referred to a minute
48:42
ago spaces and spaces in maine
48:46
where we can find community where we can
48:48
find companionship um in maine i find it
48:51
in friendships
48:53
in encounters and conversations with
48:55
people engaged in activities that
48:57
support gender and racial justice
49:01
i met three wonderful sisters one of
49:04
whom is on this battle tonight during a
49:06
grant making process for racial justice
49:08
i mean it it it feels like a bond that
49:12
that is with me
49:14
um

49:14
even though i see them sporadically
49:17
outdoor afro and the third place are
49:19
important spaces for me for connection
49:22
with bipoc folks
49:24
black girl in maine is a is a is a the
49:27
archive is a place where i could find
49:29
some grounding you know somebody who's
49:32
you know
49:33
doesn't make me feel like the thoughts
49:35
that i'm having or the reactions i'm
49:36
having to something are from from from
49:39
out there somewhere but really they're
49:40
grounded in a persp experience and
49:42
perspective that is is is
49:46
validated
49:47
um and i find it when i challenge myself
49:50
to learn and to think about something
49:52
new or in a new way
49:54
like hearing people talk about
49:57
their different paths and their
49:59
experiences and the things that
50:00
influence them
50:02
that's another space where i

50:05
feel as if it's a space for me to to to
50:08
grow so
50:10
you know
50:11
finding that those communities finding
50:13
those conversations finding those
50:14
connections
50:16
that uh validate my experience
50:19
but also challenge me in a way that
50:20
helps me
50:22
grow think think perhaps differently
50:25
those are very special to me
50:28
yeah i'm thinking like um
50:31
the validating experience and like i i
50:35
i always turn to
50:37
black folks and black women uh to help
50:41
me
50:42
confirm and affirm whatever i think of
50:45
as the truth
50:47
um
50:48
and so like thinking back to the that
50:50
you know uh leslie talking about that
50:52
grant making experience that we had to
50:55
together i can re

50:57

i can remember uh being in the meeting

51:00

the very first meeting and meeting you

51:02

know and

51:03

working with these three other black

51:05

women and then um and having my own like

51:10

uh amara if you everyone always thinks

51:12

that i am angry and i a lot of times i

51:15

am angry because i have every right to

51:16

be angry you know

51:18

like if someone tried to touch my head i

51:20

am angry don't violate my personal space

51:23

just because

51:24

you have some sort of curiosity so yeah

51:26

i have sometimes i have a right to be

51:27

angry but anyway so you know i have my

51:29

own um i'm a very direct communicator

51:32

and so people tend to people tend to

51:33

think that that means that i am angry at

51:36

them or or hurting them deeply and so i

51:38

can remember at that the very first

51:40

meeting i'm like trying to process all

51:42

of the things that this grant making

51:45

this grant making process something i'd

51:46
never really done before
51:49
and then um
51:51
but didn't really know you didn't really
51:53
know the two other black women well
51:55
uh and then i was at a farmers market in
51:57
portland
51:58
and uh
52:00
one of the people who we have been
52:02
sitting around that table maybe like
52:04
you know this is maybe the second
52:06
meeting or whatever um she was there
52:08
with her partner and she just kind of
52:10
pulled me aside and she said i've been i
52:12
was watching your face during the
52:13
meeting tell me what you really think
52:15
and i was like yes
52:17
you want to know what i really think
52:18
because
52:20
i don't know i just think that i just
52:22
always find that um
52:25
you know it
52:29
i guess i'm thinking back to i don't
52:30
remember who it was maybe cozy maybe

52:32

mara who was talking about just being

52:35

finding a commun another community of uh

52:37

finding a community of black women when

52:39

you're in college that help affirm you

52:41

and help um you

52:45

uh um

52:47

who

52:48

know you in some sense so you don't have

52:49

to code switch so you don't have to

52:51

think to yourself do i want to say this

52:52

thing that's on my mind right now or do

52:55

i want to wait for a little while and

52:57

so that people don't immediately think

52:58

that i'm being you know aggressive or

53:00

you know all that stuff

53:02

um and in that moment at that farmers

53:04

market when she came up to me and she

53:05

asked me that question i was like oh

53:07

all right

53:09

yes i'm so happy to be at that table

53:11

with you and

53:13

with the other two with all you know

53:15

with leslie you and the other person

53:16
yeah so anyway
53:19
um i just wanted to i had written down
53:21
the word truth when amar when you were
53:23
talking about being invalidated um
53:26
and i just think um
53:28
that's probably an experience that all
53:30
of us have had especially those of us
53:31
who've gone through any kind of
53:33
institution grad school jacked me up
53:35
just like it probably checked
53:38
checked everybody else up so
53:42
anyway
53:44
yeah on that note
53:47
um oh cosy you go next
53:49
yeah i just wanted to talk about um
53:51
something that sama said um you know i
53:54
saw your face during that meeting i just
53:57
wanted to point out the collective look
54:00
that black people can give each other
54:02
and just instantly know because that's
54:04
my favorite form
54:06
that's my favorite type of formation of
54:08
a community to be honest to be honest in

54:11
all seriousness
54:13
um
54:14
you know i love being in a space with my
54:17
sister because even if we're on a zoo
54:20
meeting i can just look down at her
54:22
little square and know exactly what
54:24
she's thinking um
54:26
with the two black female friends that i
54:29
have we can just look at each other in a
54:31
room um in a class when we know that
54:33
there's something going on that someone
54:36
is saying that we're like you know has
54:38
to [__] our head you know open our eye
54:41
just a tad bit
54:43
um
54:44
just to recognize i see you i understand
54:47
that this is not something that
54:49
is right and is justified but
54:52
i'm here
54:54
and i am sending you brain waves in
54:56
solidarity
55:08
i don't know whether i mean the fee like
55:10
it's so true everything you're saying is

55:13
so true and i don't know whether to be
55:15
genuinely happy or genuinely sad that
55:20
that is i'm right in the middle right
55:22
like
55:24
but i want to keep it positive i don't
55:26
want to keep it negative this event is
55:28
positivity
55:29
um
55:31
and we've already kind of been speaking
55:33
about this
55:34
thus far but the third question um
55:37
that we have for tonight
55:40
is how do we find rich spaces to grow
55:43
in our black feminism in our homes our
55:46
communities
55:47
and in our relationship with ourselves
55:50
and i really um
55:53
i really think about
55:55
both community and then self you know
55:57
sometimes
55:59
it's really hard especially with
56:01
everything that's happening in the world
56:04
um

56:06
to be okay right and sometimes it's it's
56:08
so it's okay to not be okay
56:11
but how do we
56:13
again find joy find
56:16
find people right who can help remind us
56:20
that
56:20
there's always
56:23
some
56:24
maybe it's through spirituality there's
56:26
always some beacon of light peace of
56:28
hope um
56:31
when we come together
56:32
that can
56:33
[Music]
56:35
maybe not
56:36
like fix but alleviate a lot of a lot of
56:39
the
56:41
tensions and
56:43
difficulties we experience
56:45
um
56:47
and so
56:48
i don't know if anyone
56:50
feels

56:51
called to respond i know dr banks and
56:53
amara you haven't gotten to talk about
56:55
community yet so
57:00
i can go ahead with that one um
57:02
i actually
57:04
had sort of a
57:07
interesting experience thinking about
57:08
this as we were preparing for the
57:10
evening
57:12
that
57:15
in my mind i'm sort of at a place
57:18
sort of what i talked about before where
57:22
i
57:23
see myself as having a unique
57:26
perspective
57:27
um where i have the opportunity to pour
57:30
into other people
57:32
um and sort of sprinkle the black girl
57:34
magic right
57:35
um
57:36
but in a way
57:37
that
57:38
helps sort of decolonize

57:42
one happy experience at a time
57:45
so i think that um and we sort of talked
57:48
about this during my podcast episode
57:51
that there's a lot of
57:55
things in the world that try to rope
57:57
black women into
58:00
co-signing on
58:01
[Music]
58:03
colonizer behavior
58:05
where it's like
58:08
it would be easier for me
58:10
if
58:11
so from the perspective of the the
58:13
spoken word piece that i presented um
58:16
it's a conversation between a black man
58:18
and a black woman
58:19
as a black man
58:21
you know they go through these
58:24
experiences where it's like i'm sort of
58:27
halfway to white manhood
58:29
and so
58:30
i need to be able to control things or i
58:34
need to be able to

58:36
um
58:38
get to this
58:40
level of success that has been dangled
58:43
in front of me and the
58:44
best way that i can do that
58:47
is to control you so like help me feel
58:51
empowered by co-signing on this
58:54
colonizer behavior right
58:56
or
58:57
it would make everybody feel better if
59:00
you could just straighten your hair
59:02
it would be better or make everybody
59:05
feel more comfortable
59:07
if you didn't speak so directly right
59:10
these kinds of things
59:12
um and so
59:16
within the information that's being
59:19
communicated through these
59:20
microaggressions
59:22
it's like who you are is not okay
59:25
what you're doing is not okay
59:28
and not only that but it is your
59:30
responsibility to make me comfortable

59:33
the way that i want you to make me
59:35
comfortable even if it puts you out of
59:38
sorts
59:39
um which i obviously completely reject
59:42
right
59:44
and so
59:45
not only
59:46
just for me to be able to resist those
59:49
things and say no
59:51
you can take me as i am or you can walk
59:54
but also
59:55
you know to build environments or
59:59
put forth this energy and this thought
60:03
that
60:05
that colonial mindset was never the jam
60:09
and so
60:10
we need to deconstruct that sort of one
60:13
piece at a time
60:15
so whether it's in
60:17
the way that i choose to manage the
60:19
students that work in my lab and treat
60:21
them as humans
60:23
and show my colleagues that that's an

60:25
appropriate and sustainable way to
60:28
manage a staff
60:30
and that you still get really good
60:31
results and publish high end papers and
60:34
all of these kinds of things by being
60:36
nice to people and feeding them pound
60:38
cake occasionally
60:40
um you know i i think that's
60:43
the best way that i can sort of push
60:46
this idea
60:47
that we don't have to be
60:50
so competitive we don't have to have
60:53
this idea
60:54
that being successful means that i'm
60:57
stepping on other people
60:59
which i think is a lot you know that has
61:01
been born out of this colonial mindset
61:04
and so for me sprinkling the black girl
61:06
magic is just sort of deconstructing
61:09
that
61:10
and in the spaces where i have the
61:12
agency to do it
61:14
make sure that i'm presenting this

61:17
alternative way of being
61:20
so that people hopefully will catch on
61:22
to that and say ah i don't have to be
61:25
mean to people or talk down to them
61:28
you know in order for them to
61:30
produce what i need them to produce it's
61:32
a whole different way of thinking about
61:34
this
61:36
that's more productive and it doesn't
61:37
tear people down
61:39
and i think that's you know sort of the
61:41
the better way to do it but to just
61:44
live it out
61:46
so that you know that's my way of um
61:48
bringing it to the world
62:04
lori what i hear you talking about
62:06
there's is the both and
62:09
i hear you talking about the the
62:12
the critique critiquing
62:15
colonization critiquing and colonization
62:17
of the mind
62:18
you know uh
62:20
this and what other folks have talked

62:22
about the imposition of these norms
62:26
and standards
62:28
based on
62:30
a
62:30
a white
62:32
heterosexual
62:35
middle-class
62:37
male ideal and
62:40
so
62:41
so
62:43
making sense of how that imposes certain
62:46
things on all of us and at the same time
62:50
responding in a way that says
62:52
here's my innovation here's my
62:54
creativity here's my black girl magic
62:57
it's it's the both and that i think is
63:00
really powerful
63:01
i think it it it offers something
63:04
that we don't often see and we don't see
63:07
enough of
63:08
in the world
63:10
um and i think
63:12
black feminism is a is a

63:15
is a source
63:16
for that
63:18
um
63:18
both the
63:20
individual claiming of self and doing
63:23
what you need to do what i need to do to
63:25
be well and active and on the other hand
63:28
providing a touchstone for the vision
63:31
you want to create of a different world
63:33
and a different way to be in it
63:35
[Music]
63:39
and i think an instrumental part of that
63:42
too of being able to sprinkle black girl
63:45
magic is also to i'm thinking of like
63:47
almost tinker bell
63:49
but
63:50
there was actually a black tinker bell
63:52
now that i think about it but i from
63:54
when my sister was younger and the fact
63:56
that i don't know her name bothers me
63:59
um
64:01
but it's it's transforming people into
64:04
black girl one word i'm thinking of um

64:06
robin boileron who we've been reading um
64:10
in this black feminist class
64:13
um
64:15
of
64:16
creating black girl allies and what does
64:18
it mean to
64:20
be
64:21
i think it takes more than allyship i
64:23
think it takes a sense of love and being
64:26
a stake
64:27
holder that sounds very capitalist i'm
64:29
sorry being being connected
64:32
to
64:34
the prosperity the joy of black women
64:37
and girls right
64:39
brittany cooper defines black feminism
64:42
as her love of black women and girls
64:45
period
64:46
that's that's all
64:49
that it really is um in her perspective
64:52
and i i completely agree
64:55
um
64:56
and there's a question in there

64:57
somewhere i'm so sorry and my dog's also
65:00
running around eating photographs
65:03
so i'm
65:04
i'm in a bit of a pickle
65:06
if someone can extract a question from
65:09
what i was just saying that would be
65:11
wonderful
65:16
i don't know
65:17
a question oh wait let me see it was
65:19
someone else about it amara were you
65:21
like trying to come off me
65:24
okay
65:25
go ahead go ahead iridessa that's her
65:28
name thank you it was cool it was a cosy
65:30
or amara cozy
65:32
thank you i i looked at cozy um i
65:36
appreciated iridessa i appreciated aisha
65:39
from winx club um
65:42
all of the black movie characters all
65:45
the black girl movie characters and tv
65:47
show characters um i just want to say
65:49
had a profound impact on me personally
65:52
because i never saw that um as the the

65:55

protagonist um

65:57

so yeah black finger bell and all of

66:00

them i also

66:02

i also thank them for my origin story i

66:04

guess

66:05

um

66:07

so to

66:08

to kind of go back to the question um

66:11

of finding rich spaces in

66:14

community

66:16

i

66:18

i recently had the opportunity to um

66:21

hear dr ianna elizabeth johnson speak

66:25

and i i asked her a question uh that it

66:28

was not anything related to her work but

66:30

really about her experience as a black

66:33

woman in academia in science and in

66:35

policy spaces

66:37

about how her identity has influenced um

66:42

the the way that she's moved through

66:44

these spaces um and i guess the the

66:47

communities that she's in

66:50

uh who don't necessarily embody or

66:53

represent the mixture of identities that

66:55

she does

66:56

um

66:59

and

67:00

uh

67:01

she responded to me that

67:04

um it was not the response i was

67:06

expecting nor was it the response that i

67:08

hoped for

67:09

um that sometimes one just really needs

67:11

to play the game and um

67:15

it is

67:17

it is unfortunate that that is true

67:20

um and i thought about it for a long

67:22

while i actually um i was supposed to be

67:24

doing some work um because the panel was

67:26

in the evening and i i just just kept

67:29

thinking about it about playing the game

67:31

about

67:32

um not necessarily conforming but also

67:35

um being wary and like recognizing and

67:38

maybe um

67:39

[Music]

67:40
laughing at a joke that you didn't think
67:42
is so funny was the example that she
67:44
gave uh things of that sort
67:47
um and i thought about it for a while
67:50
um and i i also recognize my
67:55
personal
67:56
experiences
67:59
of
68:00
really being in spaces where i was the
68:03
only one who held the mixture of
68:04
identities that i did being in
68:06
communities that
68:07
i was the only black woman
68:10
and feeling uncomfortable in that but
68:13
continuing to play the game
68:15
nonetheless and i think my primary
68:17
motivator for playing the game
68:20
um is is hope is the hope that
68:24
through my presence and my existence
68:28
that other young black girls might be
68:29
able to find those spaces and might be
68:32
able to
68:34
seek their passions and maybe an avenue

68:36
that they were not ever expecting or
68:38
intending to
68:40
and that
68:41
when it comes to
68:42
who they see
68:44
that maybe i am one of those spaces that
68:46
they see
68:48
and we can kind of build a community in
68:50
ourselves
68:52
i think that this is
68:55
this this for me is is something that's
68:58
really important
68:59
um i'm really grateful for the work that
69:02
i do that i direct our youth engagement
69:04
work
69:05
and i have an incredible
69:06
um
69:07
young black
69:09
girl um who's one of the fellows for our
69:13
youth network and she is so so awesome
69:17
and she is absolutely incredible and
69:21
anytime we're on a call together
69:22
provides me with so much hope um and i

69:25

am the only i used to i want to say i am

69:28

but i'm not anymore this it's the thing

69:31

i was the only person who held my

69:32

mixture of identities in the work that i

69:35

did and now i'm not and that feels so

69:38

great and that is so inspirational and

69:40

it's so hopeful to me

69:42

um

69:43

and

69:43

if i hadn't i guess played the game in a

69:46

sense

69:48

and i wouldn't have that connection um

69:52

so

69:53

although

69:55

although i don't

69:58

i think playing the game is hard playing

69:59

the game is difficult but i think it's

70:01

sometimes it is necessary um it is it's

70:05

living in that uncomfortability of okay

70:07

i am the only person i recognize that

70:10

that is not um that's nothing that i

70:12

will change who i am i will still be

70:14

unapologetically myself but i am

70:16

recognizing that um

70:18

it is me who is here but also it is the

70:21

hope and the opportunity that your face

70:24

and having other folks see you maybe who

70:27

again

70:28

didn't

70:29

expect themselves to be in that avenue

70:32

or that area

70:34

that you can really find community with

70:36

each other um and build a larger

70:38

community with yourselves as well

70:42

oh mara to be

70:45

a black woman and a trailblazer in any

70:47

kind of field is like a

70:49

i just

70:51

um

70:52

my heart is just falling for you because

70:55

um

70:56

it is such a

70:59

a mixed burden and a blessing

71:01

as you just articulated

71:03

um and i think that i you know

71:07

i recently i recently um

71:11

um

71:12

came to know not personally just like

71:14

like to know she existed and i've heard

71:16

her do some talks this this large

71:18

carnivore um ecologist

71:21

um her name is dr ray wynne grant and

71:24

she like

71:26

and she's like

71:27

amazing

71:29

and i don't know of any like so she

71:31

deals with large animals like bears and

71:33

things and i think

71:35

that um i mean my time has passed but if

71:38

if i were i mean i'm 45 i'm not going to

71:40

become a large carnivore ecologist but

71:43

if i were like a young person

71:45

and i was able to see someone like her

71:47

or someone like you i just

71:49

it would have

71:51

um

71:52

maybe would have made my like

71:54

my science-heavy past stick in a

71:57

different kind of way i was pre-med for

71:59
a long time i don't know maybe it would
72:01
have made it stick in a d in in some
72:03
kind of way and i just
72:05
i am so grateful that you
72:08
are in the positions you're in that
72:10
you're in in places that you you know in
72:12
the spaces that you are occupying
72:14
um and just think about all the people
72:16
you are bringing with you who aren't who
72:18
you know
72:19
some of them are present like this young
72:20
person but then some of them aren't
72:22
aren't aren't there yet but you're like
72:24
you're just you're making so much space
72:26
for them and that is beautiful and so
72:28
thank you for that
72:33
i have to say as you were talking about
72:35
playing the game
72:37
i
72:38
my critical black memory which is a term
72:41
that i encourage everyone to look up
72:43
because i think it's the coolest thing
72:45
ever and i talk about it all the time

72:46
now
72:47
um went to several spaces so one is the
72:51
actual action of pressing play on a song
72:53
by the game
72:55
which again
72:57
or like 90s mid-2000s reference he's a
73:00
rapper
73:00
um his claim to fame is how we do
73:04
and it's the soundtrack that's going on
73:06
in the back of my head
73:08
as i think about how
73:11
instrumental it is to play the game to
73:13
change it for the next generation and
73:15
that's really what all the generations
73:17
before us
73:18
have been doing they have been playing
73:20
the game and they have been slowly
73:22
changing it and we benefit from their
73:24
work and we have to now
73:27
work ourselves
73:29
to
73:30
continue this change
73:32
to push towards equity equality

73:35

liberation

73:37

and i i also wanted to

73:40

i'm just reading my notes i'm so sorry i

73:42

want to also mention the fact that it's

73:44

so important that we can bring our whole

73:47

selves into spaces right

73:50

to be a scientist or a doctor

73:53

it does not

73:55

box you in this one

73:57

type of being and thinking and knowing

73:59

you bring your book your black feminism

74:02

like the bag that you carry into the

74:04

supermarket

74:06

you know with you because now no plastic

74:09

bags in maine which should be everywhere

74:12

um

74:13

you bring that with you into every space

74:16

and you cannot just bring it but you can

74:19

show it off

74:20

you can have those multiplicities be

74:23

acknowledged appreciated recognized

74:26

and lead

74:27

right lead

74:29
the field that you're in into its next
74:32
iteration and dimension
74:34
um
74:36
yeah i just i felt really called to say
74:38
that just
74:40
because i i want this conversation to
74:42
never end
74:43
selfishly but every people have kids i
74:45
have a dog a hot dog dog who's
74:48
destroying my house
74:50
um
74:53
oh oh you're not you go you go sama
74:56
i just wanna um so i just wanna
74:59
also say like there's a there's another
75:01
piece of this in terms of thinking about
75:03
black feminism how it can nurture
75:06
community and nurture ourselves that i
75:08
just want to make sure we
75:12
that is out there because
75:15
you know while we are talking about
75:17
how potent our black girl magic is
75:20
recognizing we live in a very very white
75:22
state and there are very you know there

75:24
are very few black people very few black
75:26
women and uh tokenization is real and we
75:31
very quickly all can get very very
75:33
exhausted right i mean
75:36
if you're not in maine you're in new
75:37
england it is exhausting um because
75:40
you know um
75:43
you know
75:45
amara knows this just i'm a person who
75:47
likes the outdoors
75:49
um
75:50
i i
75:51
am a volunteer leader for an
75:53
organization called outdoor afro i am
75:54
not someone who does anything around
75:57
climate crisis the climate crisis then
76:01
you know uh environmental justice not
76:03
really that's like not like i'm still
76:05
learning but i don't know how many
76:07
people see me
76:09
see that i do outdoors things and
76:10
they're like please come talk to us
76:12
about

76:14
uh environmental justice always and i
76:16
always though do you know amara i didn't
76:18
know cosi but now i know cozy so i don't
76:20
say do you know omar do you know cosi
76:23
so the second that they see any of us
76:25
and see like oh wow they are articulate
76:28
they can speak some words
76:30
they want us to be on things and so the
76:32
impulse to there is a
76:35
um i sometimes have this i'm speak for
76:37
myself i guess i have sometimes have
76:39
this
76:40
past smack had this very strong impulse
76:43
to be like this is
76:45
this
76:46
this i have to correct this thing that's
76:49
happening i have to
76:51
and i would and i that's what i would do
76:53
i would step into places and do you know
76:55
whatever i guess sprinkle the black girl
76:56
magic but
76:57
that is
76:59
exhausting and so

77:02
the other thing that i think that black
77:04
feminism can teach us is about
77:07
rest and is about caring for ourselves
77:09
because that is also revolutionary
77:13
and about saying no
77:15
and deciding
77:17
deciding what spaces you're going to put
77:18
yourself in and what spaces you just you
77:21
don't have to
77:22
so i mean i know mario you're talking
77:23
about playing the game i hope that some
77:25
point um
77:27
i'm not 50 yet but i do like whoever
77:29
said that when you're 50 you can just
77:30
stop caring about things
77:32
i'm not 50 yet but i do feel like
77:35
i can i hope i i hope i
77:38
i feel like i care less than i used to
77:40
about playing the game i hope
77:43
um
77:45
i want to read a quote from um i think i
77:48
brought this up in our in our little in
77:50
our podcast lauren um

77:53
um alexis pauline gums wrote this
77:55
beautiful book called undrowned
77:58
black feminist lessons from marine
78:00
mammals it is
78:02
and it's in very short digestible
78:04
vignettes um
78:06
and it's really beautiful
78:09
and she
78:11
i have this quote and i write poetry and
78:13
i took this quote
78:15
um
78:16
from
78:17
this book that she wrote and i
78:20
um use it as like the introduction to a
78:22
poem made up of different haikus that i
78:25
wrote and she writes
78:28
quote and what a celebration and what a
78:30
celebration when we realize that our
78:33
survival need not make us into monsters
78:36
and
78:38
um you can
78:41
interpret that quote any all sorts of
78:43
different ways because there are words

78:44
that are on a page and they're up to our
78:47
interpretation but i like to think about
78:48
that as like
78:50
as like the sweetness that we all need
78:52
and that we all deserve um
78:55
because
78:56
um
78:57
because of all the things that we have
78:59
experienced
79:00
being black women and
79:02
being in high demand when things go awry
79:05
and maybe you can fix it
79:08
um so i just want to advocate like rest
79:11
relaxation
79:12
finding i i you know um regrounding
79:16
all of those things that's to me that's
79:18
also black feminism has also taught me
79:20
that
79:22
yeah just speaking about teachings
79:25
um being the youngest on the panel i'm
79:27
just able to see you know
79:30
myself in all of you and just hoping to
79:34
be

79:35
you know just as powerful and just
79:38
so able to be so comfortable with
79:41
yourself
79:42
you know i want to see myself i want to
79:45
be that way when i'm at all of your
79:48
stages of life because i'm still only
79:50
17. um
79:52
especially as
79:54
you know you all talk about your
79:55
experiences in higher education
79:58
as i am starting to
80:01
you know come into a little bit of
80:03
contact with because i'm starting to
80:04
apply to colleges right now as a senior
80:07
i'm tired already and
80:10
i
80:11
and i've barely gotten any um any
80:14
college decisions yet and so
80:17
just being able to see how you all
80:20
navigate
80:22
this
80:24
junk level world called academia is just
80:26
so incredible to me and i just

80:29
admire all of your contributions to the
80:33
game
80:34
and
80:35
um
80:36
making the game a lot more tolerable so
80:41
young black people like me are able to
80:43
step foot in these spaces and feel seen
80:47
and feel heard
80:48
and feel like
80:50
i'm able to actually make it
80:53
so thank you
80:55
oh my goodness i was like when is the
80:57
waterworks it's gonna come right now
80:59
that's when they're coming
81:02
oh my goodness
81:05
i i just echo that i'm
81:07
literally only
81:09
two years older than my sister well two
81:12
years and seven months um and so
81:16
um i
81:19
am excited for next week i'm stuck i'm
81:22
stepping into my um second decade of
81:25
life

81:29

i'm so excited um especially

81:32

with this with this conversation

81:35

um

81:36

because

81:38

i

81:40

i've i'm really proud of the personal

81:42

growth that i've made

81:43

um and the recognition of my value and

81:47

my worth

81:48

um and not discounting it

81:51

and having heard from all of your

81:52

perspectives and your experiences i'm so

81:55

incredibly excited to take that insight

81:58

um into my my second decade of life

82:02

and and to learn with that and to grow

82:04

with that so i thank you all so much for

82:06

your your vulnerability offering up your

82:08

story so that i may learn

82:10

from them and

82:12

again as josie said

82:14

making this this walk

82:16

a little bit easier for

82:19

the generation behind you

82:28

thank you amara

82:29

leslie did you wanna

82:32

yeah um

82:34

the

82:35

i'm just

82:36

full right now

82:38

because of so many things that you all

82:40

have been been talking about i want to

82:43

pull a couple of threads and one begins

82:46

with the conversation that all of us

82:48

have been having about

82:50

self-care the importance of self-care

82:52

and the ways in which

82:54

black feminism orients us to take care

82:56

of ourselves

82:58

and i have to ask the question for what

83:02

um

83:03

and i

83:04

my own riff on that

83:06

is not

83:09

not only for our survival not only for

83:12

our own

83:14

to to nurture our own creativity

83:16
and innovation
83:18
but also to envision a different world
83:22
cosi you talked about entering the
83:25
academy and
83:27
and
83:28
you know
83:29
being concerned about whether or not you
83:30
could survive and finding the
83:32
touchstones that will help you do that i
83:34
will also say
83:37
that
83:38
by doing that
83:40
you also
83:42
can make a mark on that place you have a
83:45
right
83:46
to make a mark on that place to help
83:49
whatever place you choose to go to
83:52
imagine differently how it can be
83:56
and so as somebody who's got a couple of
83:59
decades on you
84:02
i would simply say
84:06
and to all of you because lori talked
84:08
about the ways in which she does it in

84:10
her lab and i know in other spaces as
84:13
well
84:14
just just to to leave your mark to claim
84:17
that and to say people there's a
84:19
different way to be in the world
84:22
out of
84:23
black feminism
84:25
we draw the strength to be able to put
84:28
something new in the world to put
84:30
something more productive
84:32
more generative
84:34
more positive into the world so
84:38
be aware of that claim it and do it
84:41
honey
84:46
it's so true you're so right and we do
84:49
it
84:50
knowing that we are connected to one
84:52
another and to all of the black
84:54
feminists that come before us that's why
84:57
we do it
84:58
you know
84:59
i don't know if i don't want to like
85:02
abruptly just go into concluding remarks

85:05

i know if anybody else wants to

85:07

say anything

85:09

before we have to go

85:18

okay well i'm

85:20

deeply grateful to all of

85:24

you women here tonight esteemed

85:26

panelists

85:28

who i have the privilege of calling my

85:29

friends now

85:31

i hope that's okay

85:33

we could talk about that offline i'm i'm

85:35

99.99

85:37

sure we're we're all friends

85:39

if not closer at some

85:41

at some point

85:42

um

85:43

i want to thank my incredible

85:45

co-instructors uh liliana and kevin for

85:48

being instrumental in making this event

85:51

happen and believing

85:54

in me as like a personal side note

85:57

thank you to the ham campus activity

85:59

fund for sponsoring this event it really

86:01
means the world
86:03
to really i think every single student
86:06
of color if i can speak for them in this
86:08
moment
86:09
that a program like this can exist
86:11
at umaine at this time
86:14
i want to thank the umaine alumni
86:15
association for hosting
86:17
the webinar tonight
86:19
and finally thank you to the viewers of
86:22
this event for your compassionate
86:23
listening
86:24
i hope that you have a safe and healthy
86:26
holiday season
86:28
okay good night everyone
86:32
good night