

PROFESSIONAL
TROUBLEMAKER



with **LUVVIE AJAYI JONES**

Professional Troublemaker with Luvvie Ajayi Jones

Mind Your Own Body (with Gabourey Sidibe) - Episode 05

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Welcome to the Professional Troublemaker podcast! This is the place where we help you cultivate the courage, authenticity and audacity you need to use your voice, take up space and live a life that is so bold, even your wildest dreams say #goals. I'm your host, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, New York Times bestselling author, sought after speaker and side-eye sorceress bringing you thought-provoking conversations with amazing people who have taken action, and have consistently showed up with the courage and confidence they needed to become the fear-fighters they are today. Like the late, great John Lewis said, these are the kind of people who are "Never, ever afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

Before we jump into today's interview, know that this podcast is named after my second book, [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#), which hits bookstore shelves on March 2, 2021.

How would our lives be different if we were given permission to be disruptors for the greater good? How far will we have gone if we already knew that our jobs aren't to shy away from big things but to run towards them? How dope would our legacy be if we knew that FEAR is natural and we're actually supposed to do the things that scare us? How audacious would we be if impostor syndrome wasn't holding on to our ankles? In my new book, I talk about all these things and how my life has transformed as a result of being the person who committed to doing the things that feel bigger than me, doing the things that feel scary as shit and things that make me lose my breath.

This book is dedicated to my late grandmother, Funmilayo Faloyin, who was the professional troublemaker I looked up to when I was growing up. You know what you can say to an elderly Nigerian stateswoman who has been through the darkness of life and conquered all the mountains placed in her way? Not a damn thing. That spirit, those lessons and that fortitude is the energy I brought to this book. So you know it's anointed!

The Fear-Fighter Manual is game-changing, and I know it. So, if you value this show, if you value the guests and their stories, the lessons, the wisdom and inspiration I bring to you. If you've ever listened to something I said and wrote it down, YOU WILL LOVE [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#). If you want to commit to fighting fear, impostor syndrome and constantly finding courage in this scary world, this book is for you.

So, I need your help. I need you to help make this book a rousing success. I need you like I needed you for my first book [I'm Judging You: The Do-Better Manual](#). Y'all helped me change my life by supporting it, and making it a New York Times bestseller. And I need your help to do that again. Because this book

is needed and I think it will leave a mark on you. I know it, actually. We need to become professional troublemakers, and this manual that I wrote, this book that I wrote will help make it happen. So, be sure to preorder **Professional Troublemaker** TODAY wherever books are sold, or go to ProfessionalTroublemakerBook.com. You can get the hardcover, paperback or audiobook (which I narrated). So the URL is PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com. I'm so excited for you to read it.

On this episode of Professional Troublemaker, I'm talking to award winning actress, author and filmmaker Gabourey Sidibe. Gabby made her acting debut in 2009, in the film Precious – her first acting job, first audition – and came out of the gate with Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations. She's gone on to star in film and TV projects like The Big C, American Horror Story, Empire, and most recently Antebellum with Janelle Monae. Gabby is a storyteller to the core. Her memoir, This is Just My Face came out in 2017, and she's been doing work on the other side of the camera as a director.

Here's why Gabby is a professional troublemaker, and why I'm so geeked to talk to her today. She is absolutely unapologetic about who she is and has been from the beginning of her acting career. She lends her voice to causes she believes in – whether it's speaking out directly about voter suppression, building bridges for marginalized people in the entertainment industry.

This conversation is so raw and honest in all the best ways. I cannot wait for you to hear her talk about how she got her start in acting (she tells us the real story that she doesn't usually tell), how we humble Black women in all the wrong ways instead of giving them wings to soar, and we bond over the importance of therapy and the two of us being on Team Don't Hug Strangers.

Let's get into it!

Conversation with Gabourey Sidibe

LUVVIE So yes, excited to have you and one of the first things that I always ask people who join me on this show is what did you want to be when you were growing up?

GABOUREY I wanted to be a psychotherapist. I was really, really, really interested in psychology at too young an age probably because I had a best friend that used to see a therapist when she was like seven. And I would go with her sometimes if I were spending the night at her house and it was like this lady who would play with us and ask us questions. I think when you're young no one asks you real questions. It's always, "What do you want to be? A fireman?" Or something stupid. But she was like, "How do you feel about ..." And I was like ... And I grew up in an African household for a little bit so no one asked me how I felt about nothing. I thought it was like a really, really cool thing to do and to be and just be paid to have conversations. And I was really gunning to do it. I was in school to do it up until I dropped out to become an actor.

LUVVIE So first of all, we have that common is I actually thought I was going to be a psychologist also.

GABOUREY Did you?

LUVVIE And my college degree's actually in psychology so I made it a little bit. I thought I was going to be that person but I was like you know what, it's okay. But okay, so you wanted to be a psychotherapist very young. The African household. Let's talk about that thing. Okay.

GABOUREY Yeah.

LUVVIE How was that? Because there's certain things that we all have in common having grown up with African parents. When you said I want to be a psychotherapist what was the response?

GABOUREY Oh, no, I was going to be a computer programmer. Absolutely.

LUVVIE Mm-hmm (affirmative).

GABOUREY I was either going to be a computer programmer or an architect. More favorably an architect. And my African household was a little different because my mom's American. My mom's from Georgia. So it truly was a very split world in one household. But I was supposed to be an architect because my dad went to school in France and has a degree in architecture. I think his dad was like ... My grandfather was like the mayor at some point of a small town in Senegal and so they were wealthy-ish. And so he got to go to college to become an architect and then moved to New York to be a cab driver.

LUVVIE Mm-hmm (affirmative).

GABOUREY And that's what we have in ... If they don't get to be the thing that they wanted to be, it's on us to do it. Because they moved to ... Like they did the whole immigrant thing for us and for a better life for themselves but mostly for us to go ahead and take on what I think they wanted to do.

LUVVIE Take on their dreams.

GABOUREY Yeah.

LUVVIE So how was little Gabby? How did you act? What was your personality like?

GABOUREY I was very ... I'm very shy. I'm actually very, very shy. I'm like the shiest person. I look like a bitch a lot. Not because I'm not one but because I don't like necessarily ... I don't talk to strangers. I just don't. It's a strange thing to me and I'm very shy and I've always been really shy except for when I wasn't. I had the loudest laugh ever. Like I still have a really loud laugh. And my dad hated it. So sometimes I would laugh harder and louder when I knew that he was around and I knew that he was too busy for me to actually get in trouble. So sometimes I would use it like chalk against the chalkboard just to irritate him. I thought I was so funny. So before I decided to be a psychologist I decided to be a comedian. I decided to be a comedian and I had all these joke books that I decided I would just start performing in front of my family. Now this is a performance.

I remember asking my teachers to give me ... And I was not at all liked in elementary school at all. But I still would ask my teachers for like five minutes at the end of class so that I can perform

my latest joke. They were all 100% stolen but they were my jokes nonetheless. But outside of that, when I wasn't telling jokes and laughing really loudly or farting really loudly which was also another specialty of mine, I was really, really quiet and angry a lot.

LUVVIE And why do you think you were angry?

GABOUREY Because I hated everything. I'm from Brooklyn, New York and the building I lived in was kind of tough. Every now and then I'll be talking to my fiancé who's had a very suburban upbringing ... It helps that he's white. But he's had a very suburban upbringing and he'll like ... We'll be watching TV and he's like, "Oh, my babysitter's name was blah blah blah," and I'm like, "Wow, my babysitter got shot in the face at the party across the hall from my apartment." Like you know what I mean? So that was how I ... And it's not necessarily how I grew up but there was danger around like when I'm a child. And I also like ... I was a fat round child who was either too quiet or too loud and other kids didn't like me. And I didn't like other kids to keep it straight with you because kids-

LUVVIE Right. Kids are assholes.

GABOUREY They're such assholes. They're such dicks. And I didn't like them. And so yeah, I was angry a lot. My childhood was extremely uncomfortable. Sometimes I watch *Euphoria*. I just got into this Netflix show called *Grand Army* and it's about teenagers at a school in Brooklyn and their school looks a lot like my high school. I went to a gigantic school in Manhattan called Washington Irving. And it's a lot like that and I'm like there's no amount of money I would go back in time and be a child for again. They haven't found the number. Like there's no amount of money. A billion dollars, a zillion dollars, I won't do it.

LUVVIE Again, because kids are assholes and anybody who's anything remotely close to different is going to be considered the target of that thing.

GABOUREY Yeah. And also the thing about being a kid and kids being assholes is like when you're a kid, you are also an asshole.

LUVVIE Also that. Facts. Facts.

GABOUREY Yeah. Your brain's not 100% formed. Your opinions aren't really formed either. Your opinions are based one either what you pretend to not like or what the cool people like and what you should like also. If I had to go to high school during the TikTok ... None of the challenges. I'm doing none of them. I couldn't do any of this. I got out of high school in 2001. Not everybody had a cellphone even.

LUVVIE No. No. No.

GABOUREY So just in the nick of time. If I had to do this in 2020, no thank you.

LUVVIE First of all, the fact that ... We are the bridge generation. So we're the ones who remember the world when you couldn't have a cellphone because that thing costs \$1,000 and most parents are like why?

GABOUREY And it came in a briefcase.

LUVVIE It came in a briefcase. And when you even tried to get on the internet ... Remember when it would take us like 36 hours to download one song on Napster or Kazaa?

GABOUREY First of all, you had to get the American Online CD out of the newspaper. That's number one.

LUVVIE Yes.

GABOUREY And then you had to make sure that nobody was trying to call the house, that no one wanted to make a phone call. Yes.

LUVVIE Yes. And then you would be this close. You would be like 85% to downloading this song, the song that just came out, and if somebody would call your house and you're like my whole work for the last 15 hours just gone.

GABOUREY Now I can't listen to Nelly and Kelly Rowland all of a sudden.

LUVVIE None of my Backstreet Boys CDs. I can't. Just mad. People don't understand struggle. They do not understand struggle.

GABOUREY They don't.

LUVVIE They don't understand struggle. It's okay.

GABOUREY What they do understand is like sending a nude and then having that nude leaked and then everybody from every school in the surrounding area calling you a slut because you liked a boy enough to show him your nipple. That's what they understand. And let me tell you, what I don't, that. And I don't-

LUVVIE You know what? That's a different type of struggle that actually I'm so glad we did not have. Our struggles were very like analog struggles. These kids' struggles are very different. They're like, "Oh, if I take one picture it might ruin my life." Us, we ain't have a chance to take pictures. We have to go get it done and Walgreens and who has time?

GABOUREY First off all, you have to make T-shirts with your best friends.

LUVVIE Facts.

GABOUREY Then you have to go the mall. Like that's a lot, yeah.

LUVVIE Everything we had to do had multiple steps. Okay. We couldn't even be as mischievous as we wanted because we needed multiple steps to do it.

GABOUREY There's a lot of time to think again. There's a lot of time to be like no, that's not worth it.

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah. Which stopped you from doing a lot of dumb shit. Now they can do dumb shit in a second. We had to plan our dumb shit. We had to plan our dumb shit.

GABOUREY You had to take days off from schools to do our dumb shit. That's right. God bless. Good for us.

LUVVIE Good for us. I'm so glad.

GABOUREY We made it.

LUVVIE I'm so glad we grew up when we did because all the different ... The people that we were then, oh my God. So you were in high school, high school was trash. What were you involved in? What was your friend group like?

GABOUREY Okay. The school I went to was 10 floors big. I went to a giant school. There was no popular kids or nerd kids. There was none of that. There was genuinely too many in the school for that. I don't know sport ball so I didn't play on any teams. But the only team to be on was like the volleyball team. The boys had a basketball team. There was no football in sight at all. I hear that football happens at other high schools. That's strange. Like my fiancé was explaining to me that they had two dances a year every year.

LUVVIE Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Homecoming and prom.

GABOUREY Yeah, that's what he was saying.

LUVVIE Yeah.

GABOUREY No, no. No. You get a prom when you graduate in your senior year. My high school was four years. I only went for three years because I got there in 10th grade because my junior high was a different ... Whatever. But the only prom in sight was when I'm in 12th grade and I'm actually graduating high school. Again, there's the structure of my high school is very different than like what Zac and Slater and them did on *Saved By the Bell*. So my friend group was at first some bitches I didn't like. But I knew them from junior high. But I didn't like them in junior high but we both happened to be in high school so we was best friends because location, location, location. We did not like each other but we were best friends. And then at some point in the 11th grade I found someone I did like. So I completely dropped off that other friend group and started hanging out with my homegirl because we both liked N*SYNC.

LUVVIE Yes.

GABOUREY That's how we were friends.

LUVVIE Yes. N*SYNC has started many a friendship. Yes.

GABOUREY Yeah. That's what we did and we were best friends 11th grade and 12th grade. We were best friends until we were like 24 and then location switched. But my friend group was really normal. We really didn't like each other but we were stuck together and that's just it. And some people are ... No. No, no, no, I have zero friends from high school.

LUVVIE Gotcha. That's very different from my high school experience because my high school was incestuous in that everybody still hangs out with each other in the weirdest way.

GABOUREY You're from Chicago, right?

LUVVIE I'm from Chicago by the way of Nigeria. I came here when I was nine.

GABOUREY So you went in high school and stuff in Chicago. I know stories about Harper but outside of that.

LUVVIE Oh I was in Whitney Young which was like bougie but it was on the ... What's funny is Whitney Young was bougie but it was on the edge of the west side.

GABOUREY Okay.

LUVVIE So had you gone two blocks away from Whitney Young you would be in an area where your parents would be like don't go. I was on the basketball team for two year and I remember one year we had a game with one of the best teams in Chicago and they were on the west side. They're like four blocks away from Whitney Young. We're like not that far. But their area was so different from ours that our coach gave us a pep talk beforehand and said, "If you want to go to the bathroom you tell an adult. We have to walk you there because you might get beat up on the way there." We was like, "Oh okay. We're not set for that." We was like, "We're not primed for that." You know what I mean? So yeah, that was my high school. I went to the same high school that Michelle Obama went.

GABOUREY Oh okay. Me and Michy are girls.

LUVVIE You know what I'm saying. I be like, "Hey Michelle girl, we went to the same high school girl so technically we're besties. 30 years apart."

GABOUREY Obviously.

LUVVIE But yeah for me ... So Chicago's very different in that Chicagoans in general rep their high school sometimes more than their colleges.

GABOUREY Yes. Okay. Yeah. That makes sense.

LUVVIE It's just this weird culture where it's like, "Where'd you go to high school?" We'll ask that before we ask where you went to college.

GABOUREY That makes sense. Maybe that's a Black ass thing but also like I'm from Brooklyn and when I lived in Chicago, Chicago and Brooklyn are the same thing to me. They are the same. The people are the same. Like there are very Brooklyn dances, there's very Brooklyn music, there's very Chicago ... Like no, we only go to Howard's around here. And it's like everybody is proud of their high school. Like we really are like, "I don't care if you went to SUNY, I don't care if you went to Harvard. Which high school did you go to?"

LUVVIE Which high school? Yeah, for real. They'd be like, "Where'd you go? Morgan Park? Oh, you went to Morgan Park. Oh, you went to Lane Tech." I don't understand. We don't even understand it either. We just do it. We just participate.

GABOUREY But that tells you everything you need to know about somebody. You went to Whitney Young and I know that you're bougie. You know what I mean? That's how I know.

LUVVIE That's how you know. We rep our set and that's our set. Our high school. Just hot mess. So you then graduate from high school, go to college.

GABOUREY Yeah, sure. So yeah, I went to college. The other thing about high school is I struggled to get out. I didn't just fly through. I screwed around a lot. I did. Not a lot actually. I was really, really smart. I was smart and good in elementary school and I was smart and good in junior high and when I was smart and good in high school I realized no one actually cared. That no one cared in elementary school, junior high. The difference between my dad and other I think African dads, my dad did not really give a shit about my education at all. At all. I was like oh, African parents do that? That's cute. Not over here. My dad did not give a shit and my mom gave even less of a shit. While my dad wanted me to be an architect for whatever his reasons were, my mom wanted me to be a singer because she's a singer.

LUVVIE Right. She spent 30 years singing.

GABOUREY Yes. 30 or more. Yeah, singing in the subway actually because that's how she raised my brother and I. My mom was being a star. That was her focus and my dad who after ... We were the first family and he then went on to have more and more families. Like the other thing is that he ... So he married my mom and when I was five he married my stepmom and when I was eight we found out about it.

LUVVIE Okay, you know what? We got to pause on that one.

GABOUREY Right. Other reasons to be angry. That's making sense now.

LUVVIE Now let's rewind that. Okay. Toxicity is something that Africans can do differently because we will keep some secrets that will blow your mind.

GABOUREY Yeah. But like the other thing is like ... So yeah, my dad is Senegalese and in Senegal the men are allowed to marry more than one woman. This also in the Koran and my dad is Muslim.

LUVVIE Ah, he's Muslim?

GABOUREY Yes. So he was by the law of Allah and the law of his home country, he's allowed to do this. And it's open in a way that if you're going to do that, that should be open. However, my mom is American.

LUVVIE Right.

GABOUREY And he married my mom, not because they were in love with each other but because she was American. There were no lies about this. They met specifically because he was looking for a wife so that he could stay in the country. So they got married for the green card and according to my mom she didn't even give him none until they were married for over a year. But according to my dad, nope. According to my dad they were hitting it pretty quickly. But I think after they were married for over a year, she then told her parents about it because they were in Georgia. And they were like, "Who is this Ibnou that you're always talking about?" It's my dad's name. And then she's was like, "All right, I'll bring him over so y'all can meet him." And then they told them that they were married and then after that I think they ... Then my dad took her to Senegal to meet his family. And I think she fell in love with Africa and African people. So it's like my mom's 1952 Georgia. Her idea of what Africa is was extremely ignorant. But like purposely.

The images of Africans in the media and in television are ... They're changing now but they were backward on purpose. And so she fell in love with Africa and then she fell in love with him and then they had my brother and I. And she met his ... He was arranged to get married to his second wife. He was arranged to marry her first.

LUVVIE Okay.

GABOUREY So she met her ... Tola. She met her in Africa and she asked her, "Can I marry him also?" And my mom was like, "I get that you want to get married to him and I know that you guys have been arranged or whatever and I get it. He just need to divorce me first. Like he has to be done with it. Because I'm American and we got married in America. You can't do that so he'll have to divorce me first. But yes. When you're ready and we'll just ..." But then my dad's like, "I ain't marrying her and that's over and I'm about you," and all this. And then he married her. He married her anyway a few years later.

LUVVIE But he didn't tell your mom?

GABOUREY He didn't tell me mom because he wanted his cake. He wanted to eat it too. And that's just what happened. Eventually she moved to America and she lived with us. Because technically she was his first cousin and so ... And we didn't know. My brother and I didn't know. We're young kids. We had no idea. And my mom didn't know that they were together. She didn't know that they were married either. But I think that she let her come over and live with us and I think she started to suspect some stuff but also by then my mom wanted out of the marriage so she kind of let it do what it was going to do. And then yeah, when I was eight, three years or so we found out that they were married and that's how my mom got out of Brooklyn and got out of that marriage. I think she was like biding her time because it just doesn't make sense.

LUVVIE Exactly.

GABOUREY It just doesn't make sense.

LUVVIE And here you are watching it all go down.

GABOUREY Mm-hmm (affirmative). At this point I'm like eight ... Eight or nine. We lived in a big kind of apartment in Brooklyn with a terrace and I have my own bedroom. And then all of a sudden

here's this cousin. And she's cool or whatever but now I got to share my bed. But now everything's weird. And now we're leaving. And we literally moved into a one bedroom at my aunt's house in two twin beds. So my mom, my brother and I shared two twin beds. And my dad moved in the second wife. She happened to be pregnant. They already had a son that was back in Senegal. He came. Her daughter came. And they're literally still all in the same apartment but my dad has another wife and another group of kids in this same apartment. So it was like still ... I went from having my own bedroom to now my bedroom is filled with other people.

LUVVIE Right.

GABOUREY And a different family. Literally I'm seeing my family that I never thought was good enough because we're American. You know what I mean? We don't fit this thing. And like my dad finally got his African wife and his African children and they're in our slots because that's what was supposed to happen. It almost felt like we were extra.

LUVVIE Right.

GABOUREY And so yeah. Yeah that was a strange thing. So yeah, no one really cared about my education. My dad's like trying to build a farm of people.

LUVVIE A farm of people.

GABOUREY The other thing is Senegalese men don't ... I don't know if it's Senegalese men or if it's just my dad but he doesn't count his children because it's this idea that you can't count your chickens before they're hatched. So there's this idea that if you count how many kids, if you say I have 12 kids, then God will see that as being boastful and he'll take some away. So I have no idea how many children my dad has.

LUVVIE So when high school was ending, at that point where were you?

GABOUREY So by the time high school was ending ... So we lived with my aunt for like three or four years and then we moved into a studio apartment for five years and my mom and my brother and I shared a bunk bed for five years. And then when I was I think 15 or 16 we finally got a two bedroom apartment. So by the time high school was ending I had my own room again because my mom ... Because we were teenagers, my mom was like, "All right, I'm going to give you and your brother a room each and I'll just sleep in the living room." And so by the time high school was ending my relationship with my dad was shards of glass if anything at all. And I finally had some bit of privacy but also was still extremely uncomfortable. Like I actually never felt comfortable or safe until I lived by myself.

LUVVIE So then when did acting happen? How did you get to acting?

GABOUREY This is a very weird story. And I almost never tell the real story because it's bananas.

LUVVIE Give me the bananas. Give me the real story.

GABOUREY So my mom's a singer. My mom was a singer. She's retired now. But she sang in the subway. She was actually a really popular subway singer. She was very, very talented. And so a lot of people knew her and she was really able to raise my brother and I doing this. Now, while she was in the subway she would get like ... She had business cards and so she would perform at bar mitzvahs and weddings and funerals and things like that. And every now and then she would do a commercial or a movie or something. Like super every now and then. Like very infrequent. And when I was in college my mom told me that a director approached her and wanted her to audition for a movie. And I was like, "That's dope." Because it's not like she said that all the time. I was like, "You should do it." She was like, "I don't think I'm going to do it because it's based on this book called *Push* and in the book the mom is raping her daughter and I don't want to audition for that."

And I was like, "Oh, so they want you to play the mom?" And she was like, "Yeah, they want me to play the mom and I don't think I want to do ..." Because before my mom was a singer, she was a teacher.

LUVVIE Okay.

GABOUREY For like a long, long, long time. And she was like, "I don't want my kids that I taught or their parents to think that I would do this if this is not who I am." And I was like, "I think that you should do it. I think you're giving away an opportunity. Why are you singing in the subway? What is the point of singing in the subway if it's not for these opportunities to walk by?" Which is what she was doing. She was like, "I don't think this is right but read the book so you'll understand my decision." So I read the book and I was like, "Okay I get it. But still this is an opportunity that you're walking away from. You're crazy." And she said, "No, I think Monique should do the mom. Like it's got to be ..." She was like, "I think it should be Monique or somebody because she's a comedian and people already know that she's not like this. And so it shouldn't be me. Nobody knows who I am. People will punch me in the face." And I was like, "All right." And then she's like, "Do you want me to see if they casted the daughter?" And I was like, "No, I don't. I don't want you to see." Because I wasn't an actor. I was in school to be a psychologist.

LUVVIE Right. Because at this point, how old were you?

GABOUREY 19.

LUVVIE Wow, okay.

GABOUREY Yeah, I was like 19. And I was in school and I struggled so hard to get to school that I was like, "This is dumb. No. Get out of my face. Get out of my room." And so cut to five years later I'd been in school. I battled tooth and nail a very wicked depression that dropped my grades so low that I had to get out of school for a bit and even to get back in I had to get the chancellor or dean or whatever to sign and then it turns out I couldn't pay for it. So then I got a job for three years. I worked at a phone sex company for three years. And then finally I was getting back into school ... Because the whole thing is ... Did you pay for college or did you use financial aid?

LUVVIE Financial aid.

GABOUREY Same. So the thing about financial aid is you can get it the second you turn 18 to go to school. If you leave for any reason, you are no longer eligible until you are 24 years old. At 24, you can use your own taxes because when you're first doing it you're using your parent's taxes.

LUVVIE Right.

GABOUREY So I literally couldn't get back into school for three years so I had to get a job to wait to be able to use my own taxes for financial aid because I didn't want to take out any loans. So finally I'm back in school. I'm back in school. It's been a week. It's less than a week actually. It's been like three days and I'm back in school and I find a school that's just around the corner from my job so that I can take classes and go back and forth. And the way the phone sex company worked is I can work pretty much any hours I wanted to, whenever-

LUVVIE Wait, you were actually a phone sex operator?

GABOUREY I was a phone sex operator for two months before getting promoted to receptionist and then eventually I was a monitor and then also an operator. And at this point I was actually in training to become a trainer. To be the one to hire. But yeah, when the phones get busy everybody was a phone sex operator. So yes. So I could do it whenever I want. And I still lived with my mom and it's New York living. So I get a call. I'm literally sitting in the FAFSA office or something and my friend calls me and says, "Hey, this movie is coming to audition and I think they're looking for a girl like you." And I hadn't really acted. It was literally I think based on body type more than anything and the fact the guy knew me. And I was like, "What's the movie?" And he was like, "It's this book called *Push*. Have you heard of it?" And I was like, "Oh yeah, I actually read it because ..." I was like, "Oh, that movie? They're finally doing it? That's wild."

He was like, "Do you want to audition?" I was like, "No." I was like, "No, I'm good." And he's like, "Think about it because I don't think there are a lot of people." He's like, "Just think about it." And I was like, "All right, cool." So then ... And that was like a Friday. And I called my mom and I was like, "Yo, is that book still in the house?" And she was like, "Yeah. You should just reread it." And it's a really quick read. And I was like, "I don't know, maybe, whatever." And I remember that night for extra money ... Oh my God, I totally forgot this. I did a shift as a bathroom attendant at a club.

LUVVIE Oh snap. You're the one handing out mints?

GABOUREY Yeah. It's awful. It's awful. At a restaurant it's a little nicer but at a nightclub-

LUVVIE At a nightclub when people are drunk.

GABOUREY Oh my God. People blowing weed smoke in your ... It's so gross, yeah. It was the worst. I hated it so much. But I remember after that I went home at like three in the morning or something and read the book. Three, four or five in the morning. And reread the first page and was like, "This will never happen." And I put it back on the shelf. Because the audition was like Monday. It was like Monday morning and I had class at the same time. My class was downtown, the audition was uptown and I was like, "There's no way. I'm not an actor. This is not going to happen. I might as well go to class." So I leave the house and there happened to be a movie filming on the

downtown side of the street and I tried to cut through it because I didn't know how sets worked and they asked me to cross the street to the uptown side. And because I was on the uptown side, I went to the audition. And that was a Monday and they hired me on Wednesday.

LUVVIE Stop it. What? They called you back on Wednesday and said ...

GABOUREY So I did the audition, they called me back. Within an hour of leaving the audition they called me. And they were like, "We want you to come to the call back tomorrow," and I was like, "Okay." And then I went to the call back and they were like, "Wow. You don't seem nervous at all." I was like, "Because I think they're lying." Because they were like, "You're so good." And I was like, "Sure lady." And then I left the call back and got a call within a half an hour that the director wanted to meet me the next day. And so I went in to meet with the director and he just kind of offered me the part and we started shooting three weeks later.

LUVVIE Bruh.

GABOUREY Yeah.

LUVVIE What?

GABOUREY We're all in control of our lives to a point. That is some shit if could not have controlled. If I were in control of that I would have fucked it up. Absolutely. I understand that that was led by someone bigger than me, thank God.

LUVVIE Was that an instant change and shift in everything? What changed when they said yes?

GABOUREY That instant change was like yeah. It was instant but also it was like a year and a half long. I did one more shift down at the phone sexary and then decided that I was too fancy. I said, "I'm not doing these phone sex calls. I went to Whitney Young." Like all of a sudden. We started shooting three weeks later and it's so scary and it's so weird and it was ... There was a gigantic shift in my family. And the way those things happen ... That we love our family, we love our family so much and they love us. And I know my family loves me but I all of a sudden became the culmination of every opportunity that they could have had, didn't take, an ATM machine. I can finance this, I can invest in that or whatever. I really felt like I didn't have a family for a while. Like I fully felt like an orphan.

My mom, God bless her, she did not take the opportunity to audition and I did and she was, I think, really able to see her regret in me which I understand and I get. I actually get it and I feel for her. When some people say, "Oh, it could have been me, it could have been me," it really could have. But she decided that it wouldn't be. For some while I paid for that. For a while I paid for that. I had friends that we just were not jelling anymore. And people change. People change but also I'm different. We grow. We're supposed to grow. Not that any opportunity or movie or whatever's supposed to make a bitch now. I'm not supposed to be like a complete asshole. But my needs are different and they're just like, "Oh, so you're too fancy to go down to the Wendy's now?"

LUVVIE A little bit. A little bit.

GABOUREY It's like, "Oh, so you don't want to go to the Red Lobster?" And I'm like-

LUVVIE I mean I do actually enjoy a little Red Lobster but can it be delivered?

GABOUREY Yeah. This is before Postmates and them.

LUVVIE Right.

GABOUREY The world does change. And then it's like, "Oh, so you too busy to ... Oh, you can't come to my baby shower?" And it's like, "I'm literally not even in the country. I'm so sorry."

LUVVIE When *Precious* came out you got thrust into such a big limelight so quickly. And it was not always kind.

GABOUREY It's still not.

LUVVIE It's still not, right. We'll even talk about that. In that whole process all of a sudden you're ... The movie's getting all the shine. Everybody's saying your name and Monique's. Definitely not in kind ways because people are not kind to Black women who are plus sized, who are dark. They're not. So how were you functioning? How were you functioning?

GABOUREY Oh. The other thing about that sort of life is you're all supposed to be so grateful and so ... I don't know what. I feel like this is another Black ass thing. I don't know why Black people insist that everyone be so humble. And we humble Black women regularly. We humble Black people in general but especially a Black woman. We humble thyself, beloved. That's us. We be saying that. You know what I mean? White people don't say that to us. We don't say it to white people. Maybe we do. But it's us saying it to us and it's not like I'm out here being like I'm better than you. I'm just like, "Yeah, I just feel really awesome." And it'd be like, "First of all, I feel like you're ..." So like there's being happy sometimes can feel so dangerous. And being proud can feel really dangerous.

And so a lot of ... Yes. People are ... They were like, "She's so beautiful and oh my God you're so great." And all of the compliments I didn't feel like I was allowed to take and so I didn't. I would leave them on the ground. I would not believe them. I would not believe them at all. But if I'm not believing compliments I've got to believe something so it was the criticisms that I believed. Because the criticisms were coming from faces that looked like mine. And it was faces like mine that I believe is my audience that's telling me that I ain't shit, I speak too white, I also speak too ghetto, I'm also too fat but I'm also not fat enough and I'm too dark skinned but also I have really beautiful skin and I better not change it and all of these things.

And it's like, there's no winning. It didn't feel like any winning at all. And also at the same time I was nominated for so many awards and I lost so many of them. So it's like it's a professional win and also a professional loss but also like a human loss. Like a very realistic, real life person loss because no one ... I can't complain because it's like, "What you complaining for? Because if I was you," and all this stuff. It was really, really uncomfortable but I also had to smile all the time to make sure people knew that I was humbled and happy and all of these things. It's very, very stressful. It's stressful to be a Black woman no matter what you do, I think. No matter what you

do. If you're good at what you do ... Like if you're a really, really great dentist there's somebody to tell you to humble yourself. If you're a really great teacher there's someone to tell you that you need to take that down a notch. I had a lot of stress rashes.

Imagine being in an online space where people's foolishness doesn't make you want to fight the air. That might sound impossible with your current choices for social media, but I was sick of wading through nonsense to find like-minded people, so I created my own online community. And if you are the kind of person who is striving to be a professional troublemaker and fight fear, we need you to join us in that community, because you need people to cheer you on.

[LuvvNation](#) is my online community and app that is a safe space in a dumpster fire world. It's the place for the most thoughtful, funny, most chill deficient people on these interwebs. We're a community that comes together to make each other better with curated conversations, opportunities to connect, and challenges to help us transform and do better in every area of our lives. So, I want you to come in there, join us. Become a citizen of LuvvNation. So go to [luvvnation.com](#), that's [luvvnation.com](#) L-U-V-V-N-A-T-I-O-N. Download the app in the App Store or on Android, it's on iOS and Android and come on through! All right. Back to the podcast.

LUVVIE So, in 2014 I saw you at the Women's Media Center Awards was it?

GABOUREY Shit.

LUVVIE That's you right there. So you were getting an award. It was either Women's Media Center or something.

GABOUREY It was the Gloria Awards. Did I do a speech?

LUVVIE Yes.

GABOUREY Yes.

LUVVIE So I'm sitting there in the audience-

GABOUREY Were you there?

LUVVIE I was absolutely there. And the video of you that went viral, I did that.

GABOUREY Bitch.

LUVVIE That's [my video that everybody was running around. It's on my Facebook page right now.](#)

GABOUREY Are you serious?

LUVVIE Yes.

GABOUREY I had no idea that was you.

LUVVIE That was me and I didn't-

GABOUREY Oh my God.

LUVVIE So I just posted it because it was you saying ... It was talking about you growing up and what you learned. And I put the quote. It's from 2014. "If they hadn't told me I was ugly I never would have searched for my beauty and if they hadn't tried to break me down, I wouldn't know that I'm unbreakable." Gloria Awards. Yes.

GABOUREY Holy shit.

LUVVIE That clip that I posted on my Facebook fan page. Uh-huh. It went nuts.

GABOUREY I'm such a nerd.

LUVVIE And I just started seeing everybody posting it and I just posted it because it was such a moment that resonated with me because I remember sitting there being like, "Yo, she's so dope." Because I saw the screening of *Precious*. I watched the thing like a couple of times. That was around the time when I was also writing about movies on my blog and I remember writing about it. But meeting you ... I actually met you very briefly that night but it was right after that speech. And that speech ... Listen, I remember just sitting there like wow. When people talk about courage ... People think courage is just like oh, showing up ... No, like that moment was courage. Like that moment was like deep courage in front of all of these white people. Because you know Gloria Awards is all these white folk right?

GABOUREY Yeah.

LUVVIE Here you are being your full self. You had on this beautiful red dress and you gave this speech and I was like yes. I'm in the audience just like-

GABOUREY Oh.

LUVVIE Crying. So yeah, I have that video. I was like one day I'm going to tell her. I was like, one day I'm going to tell her my clip is actually one that ended up going nuts.

GABOUREY That's wild. That's wild. Yeah. Wow. I had no idea. Thank you so much.

At that point I was so terrified to write anything and say anything because I liked the idea of being able to be whatever it is that people think I am like at that point. It's like if you think I'm glamorous and you think I'm so put together and so confident then sure. If

you think I'm a bag of trash and that I should, I don't know, lose weight or whatever then sure. I was fine with that. But being my open ... Only because I ... I don't know what it is but I feel like if I tell people what I'm vulnerable about that they'll use it against me. I don't tell people my fears. Like I don't tell people my fears because I feel like they'll use it against me. And that's deep rooted stuff from childhood.

And that was kind of the first time I was like, "All right, I'm going to do it. And if they use it against me I've written it down. I did it first." You know what I mean? Like I said the thing. I did it. you can't come back and yell at me that I'm insecure about things because I told you I was. And it took a while to ... I wrote that speech in ... I woke up at seven in the morning and wrote it. And wrote, wrote, wrote until like 2 p.m. and that's what came out. And that's pretty much the unedited version of that speech. I don't know why I'm crying. It's just that that clip did go viral and then the transcript from the whole thing went viral and was tweeted and all these things and I don't even think I had a Twitter at the time. And that got me a [book deal and the book deal](#) bought me this house.

LUVVIE Wow.

GABOUREY That book deal ... The freedom of that book deal did for me ... Because before that I was like all right, I got to make sure ... Being an actor, like literally my whole job is making sure that somebody likes me enough for one slot. And that even if I audition for something I have to make you like me more than the last person you saw and more than the next person you'll see. I have to make you like me. So it's like I'm almost like at the beck and call and at the mercy of other people and their whims or whatever they need or what they like or what they don't like but I can write a fucking book now. I can write a book. Acting didn't get me this house, the book did.

LUVVIE The book.

GABOUREY The book did. I'm like sitting at my ... I have a makeup room in my house because I wrote a book and I can write another book and I can write another ... You know what I mean? There's a thing that feels like I can sustain myself. I don't have to wait for someone to decide to like me because I can write a book. Because I can write and make you feel something and make you see yourself or whatever. And that moment for me, that gut speech that was ... I did not know it was going ... It was not supposed to go viral either. It was a closed sort of thing.

LUVVIE Yeah. People don't post about Gloria Awards. I just happened to be the blogger in the room because I had won an award. Two years before I had won an award with The Women's Media Center so they will have me come to every award since then.

GABOUREY That's is so dope. Look at God though.

LUVVIE Look at God.

GABOUREY Look at Him.

LUVVIE And I just remember, I would be seeing that clip everywhere. I'm like yo, that's hilarious, it started on my site. And I'm on the thing right now reading some of the comments and so many people were like, "I have been called fat and ugly my entire life. It wasn't until I learned to love myself that anyone else's opinion truly didn't matter." 2,000 comments on that post. On that video that I posted of you. Of people just being like thank you for letting me be me and seeing this. It was such a significant thing that it's one of the first things I was like oh my God.

GABOUREY You know what, and I needed to learn that being vulnerable is not scary. It's not like a weapon that I'm giving you to stab me with. It doesn't have to be that. It really doesn't have to be that. And that going viral really taught me the power in my vulnerability and the power in being honest and the freedom really in it. Just the freedom in being like, "Oh, sometimes I have terrible days." Being able to say that is such a gift. Especially when like my whole ... What I do for a living is like ... It's slight of hand. I'm supposed to make people think that life is great or whatever. I'm a puppet. And to be a human is something I have to take by force. And I think that writing that speech and having as many people see it as they did when they were not supposed to see it ... I only wrote it because no one was supposed to see it. Because it was not supposed to leave that room.

 But what it's done for me ... Again, not just this house or the book or whatever, but like what it's done for me as a person. What it's done for my growth, my personal spiritual mental growth is ... It's-

LUVVIE That's amazing. I actually didn't know the aftermath of that speech and how much it actually did. But look, I just know that you represent a lot of courage for people because you show up with your full self in a world that is not loving you in this way all the time. And they're constantly giving you shit for it. You get a lot of shit for it. I just saw the one from a couple of weeks ago.

GABOUREY What was a couple of weeks ago? It could have been anything by now goddammit.

LUVVIE You announced your engagement.

GABOUREY Oh true.

LUVVIE You announced your engagement. In these moments I'm always thinking, "How is she standing strong in the midst of these arrows that are being thrown at her?"

GABOUREY The thing about announcing my engagement, it's so strange. So my fiancé is from Chicago. He's like a normal man. You know what I mean? He's a normal man. He works in this industry but he's an agent and he's in branding and marketing and he's on the other side of it. He's not the face of it. And he doesn't date people like me a lot or ever. So he's still very normal. Or like if he gets engaged and he like ... This man loves me. He is extremely in love with me. Wants to tell everyone because he's in love with me. Because I'm his wife and I'm his future and he loves the shit out of me.

LUVVIE Yes.

GABOUREY While I want to be like ... We actually got engaged weeks before we announced it. Weeks before. And I like ... We only announced it because he's a normal man and I want him to be able have these normal things because it's actually normal to be like, "Got engaged," on your Instagram or Twitter or whatever. That's a normal thing. And we did not think it would be what it was going to be but it was. And it's something that I had to get used to and he's going to have to get used to. And he's fine. He's fine with whatever makes me happy. It's crazy. People ask him if he has a fetish.

LUVVIE Wow. Wow.

GABOUREY He also is like very much ... He's a very nice man too. He's like a very good hearted nice man. He's like, "Oh, all of these people want to say hi to me in my DMs. And so I said hi back." And he's like and this guy was like, "Oh, you're cute. I'm so sad that you have a girlfriend. But if you ever want to hookup ..." And it's a guy. What is this?

LUVVIE Wow.

GABOUREY So I have to be like, "Okay, all right, boo. So what's going to happen is you might get a bunch of shade room gays in your DMs trying to out you and trying to be like ... They're going to send you DMs or whatever just so they can like repost it or people might now want you to be gay so you're not ... Whatever it is, it's for clicks." He like gets a lot of ... He just got DMed something and offered to do some podcast yesterday and he had to run the name by me and I had to be like, "Okay, so that's gossip and they want you on to gossip about me." It's a new world for him in a way and he does not have a fetish. He doesn't like have a fetish for either Black women or fat women.

LUVVIE That's wild. Why? Why would that be? I mean, I know why that would be the thing because people are trash. Utter garbage dumpster fire. That's the reason why. Deeply. I need people to just get their shit together. This is fucking wild to me. I'm just like, there's nothing about you that is unlovable.

GABOUREY That be the thing. That be the thing too. People will be like ... That's always between like, I'm so happy for her to like damn and I can't even get a text back or like damn he must like ... Or this or that and all these things and I'm like ... Or there are also people being like, "Girl, you need a prenup because obviously he's just there for your money and how come you can't tell that he's gay? And how come you can't tell that he's all this?" And it hurts his feelings because the people saying it are people that look exactly like me. It's me. It's my community. It's Black people. And so he's like ... He doesn't have like a Black fetish, a fat fetish, any of the fetishes. He doesn't have them.

LUVVIE But why would loving you have to be a fetish? That's the thing that is-

GABOUREY I'm dope. I be like, "Yo, you only know who I am because I'm dope. Because I'm dope. And you also don't even all the way know me. If you spent five minutes with me, you too would see I'm dope." Of course. But they can't see it because they can't see past ...

Because we have so many daggers coming to us as a community as Black people there are so many things telling us that we are unlovable, that we are ugly, that we can't get a man unless we get that Brazilian butt lift. Waist trainers, all of these things. Eyelashes that look like goddamn church fans. Unless we do that then we're unlovable and that we mean nothing. And so I just being alive am an upfront to that. Like my being alive disagrees with that and their idea of what beauty is and what standards are and they can't get past it because they secretly hate themselves and it's sad. And I can't tell you how many girls look exactly like me that are like, "Obviously he's using you and he don't want you," and all of this shit. And Brandon be like, "They look exactly like you. Why do they think you're ugly?"

LUVVIE Self hate is a bitch but that's why I'm like your presence and being is so important. Just you being you. You being like fuck y'all, I'm dope, is significant. Because they're expecting you to be like, "You guys are right. I just don't like who I am today." No, no, no. The fact that you're like listen, okay. You came out wearing your queen sweatshirt. Please.

GABOUREY How cute is this sweatshirt? This is cute.

LUVVIE It's that Ofuure?

GABOUREY Is it? It's Ofuure.

LUVVIE Yep, Ofuure.

GABOUREY Yeah.

LUVVIE Yep. I like their stuff. Their stuff is on point. Their stuff is on point. I want you. That's why I'm always rooting for you because I need you to be like, "You might not like me but I be out here collecting all these checks doing all these thing and you just going have to be mad about it."

GABOUREY And maybe it helps that again, I was a very unlikable child. Unlikable. If I ever did speak it was the wrong thing. And I'm used to it. I know people are not going to like me. And the thing is people don't like me when I'm quiet either because people don't like the way I look. There are plenty of people I'm never going to win with until I'm 110 pounds. I'm never going to win with until I have Brazilian yaki silky or whatever. There are plenty of people I'm never going to win with and I'm cool because fuck those people.

LUVVIE Listen, I'm 110 pounds and some people still don't like me so it's fine. It don't matter what we change about ourselves, people will always find a reason to not like us. They just happen to hold on to the reason for you being that you are plus sized. Even if you were to lose 95 pounds today they will still be like, "But I don't like that thing that she did that one time." It don't matter.

GABOUREY Oh no. I actually lost over 100 pounds and people were writing op-eds about how devastated they are and betrayed they feel by my weight loss.

LUVVIE What?

GABOUREY And then it's also people being like, "I thought that you was going to lose weight and how come you ain't lose weight?" And people being like, "Listen sis, you need this tea because it's ... And you just need to lose and let me help you." And I'm like, "I didn't ask for any of that. I don't need your advice. You can absolutely mind your own body. You can mind your own body if you like me big. If you like me at 700 pounds or 70, I don't give a shit. Mind your own body." Like I have a whole chapter in my book about it. Like mind your own body.

LUVVIE Mind your own body. Face your front. Face your everlasting front. Lord.

GABOUREY Look. That's it. Face your front. People need to just mind their own body.

LUVVIE That needs to be a T-shirt. You should do a T-shirt that just says it. Just says mind your own body. So for you, what do you do for the quiet moments? How are you taking care of yourself no matter what it is that's happening around you?

GABOUREY I was watching something and this little Black girl was talking about how self-care is actually a luxury. That not all of us have it. Because self-care is technically like going to the spa and things. And not every community has the ability to go to the spa. And certainly it's a pandemic and so I'm not going to a spa. But self-care is getting harder and smaller at the same time. Like the things that I do for self-care are becoming much smaller. Like I really, really love peppermint water and so I'm drinking peppermint water because this is how I care for myself. This is how I'm self-soothing. This is how I'm celebrating good things by drinking peppermint water. It doesn't have to be some trip to Tulum.

LUVVIE Agreed.

GABOUREY It doesn't have to be a castle in Turks and Caicos. It could be just sitting in ... I also got these from Amazon. I love Amazon so much. I got these little pods that smell like eucalyptus and I put them in the shower and I run the shower for two minutes and then I get in it. And the smell of eucalyptus fills my nose. It's so good. And I think they're like \$15 or something. Self-care is extremely important and it's accessible if you can think outside the box. I take care of myself and I take care ... I have two cats. We nap with the cats. My boyfriend ... Fiancé I guess.

LUVVIE Fiancé girl. It takes a minute to get used to it. It takes a minute to get used to it.

GABOUREY It's so weird. I feel so French. It's such a strange word. But my fiancé is like ... He works from home now like everybody else does. And I pretty much will wait for silence for when he's off a meeting and then we do this thing where we walk in and I go, "Hello." And he'll go, "Hello." And then we'll meet each other in the hallway or something. Or we watch programs together because he's like a grandma. And so we've been watching a lot of SVU lately. So we got to solve some of these murders. We're solving murders for self-care. And that's what we do. I love on myself. I love on my loved ones. I'll have a

long FaceTime call with my best friend. We send each other DMs of cat videos. I'm really into Tony Baker. I have two cats and he won't pay attention to my cats. And it just feels like ... I feel personally attacked that he won't do a voice over for my cats. However, we're still trying. Because I can't leave the house.

I live in California where I think someone dies of corona every eight minutes. Bummer, so sad. It's devastating. It's so devastating. It's so scary here. And my fiancé's trying to crack down on me. I can't even go through ... I can't take a casual walk through Target anymore.

LUVVIE No. That's so sad. Right. We can't go to Whole Foods. Yeah. No. You can't.

GABOUREY Cracking down on me.

LUVVIE You can't do it dog. You can't do it. You can't do it.

GABOUREY So the ways I take care of myself are very small and they're harder to do because everything feels awful but they're much more meaningful.

LUVVIE That's real. And I am a firm believer also that self-care is not just about the spa. Self-care might sometimes mean putting your phone on do not disturb for three hours just to block out the world.

GABOUREY Absolutely.

LUVVIE For me self-care, I'm drinking lemon water. So that's mine. Right. Like, look. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Self-care might mean-

GABOUREY Also I see a therapist. That's that real self-care.

LUVVIE Say that again. I need you to say that again.

GABOUREY I was like, why didn't I start with that? I see my therapist every Thursday morning. I see her through FaceTime. She's in Chicago. And I see her every Thursday morning and that's actually the best way I'm taking care of me.

LUVVIE Yes.

GABOUREY It's my favorite way of taking care of myself. I know it's a thing in the Black community, we don't know that that is for us. We don't know that we need it. We don't know that we can have it. We have no idea. We don't know that it's not something to be ashamed of. It's not. All the trauma that we ... Every day. Every time I scroll down Facebook or Twitter I'm holding myself hoping that there's not a new hashtag of some new unarmed Black man, Black teen, Black woman who's being strung up by a mob storming the capital. Every day I'm just holding myself. The trauma that we face daily in our skin, in our own skin in this country. We are not welcome here man. We are not welcome here.

I don't know if we'll ever be and every day is a fight. My mind gets tired and I need a place for my mind to rest.

Therapy is a place where my mind rests. We all deserve this bit of rest. We all deserve it. We deserve some place. I was explaining to my fiancé that if we worked in an office together and something happened, I would have him speak up to the bosses for me because I would be labeled angry. I would be labeled. So I encourage him to speak up for his Black counterparts in the office. And he does anyway. He's really, really good at that. But I explained to him why. Because he's like, "I don't know why he doesn't any ..." I'm like here's why wouldn't say anything. Here's why I wouldn't say anything. Because we just don't live in the same country. We don't. We're not welcome here. And there are very few places where we can say, "I'm actually angry," without be labeled an angry Black woman.

LUVVIE Angry Black woman. Aggressive. We've earned angry Black woman. If we are cussing every three minutes, we have earned it. Who else should not be angry? Come on. So even if they want to call us angry Black women, call me that. What have you done to allow me to be angry? What have you done to make so angry?

GABOUREY I'm angry. I'm so angry.

LUVVIE I'll be angry. That's why I'm like, you know what, honestly, I'm not going to be like I'm not angry. I'm angry. No.

GABOUREY Yeah. And you know what, we're also not angry about having to wear masks at Target. That's not us. How are we labeled so angry when I'm just saying, Karens would like to speak to the manager because her water that she's getting from the refrigerator is lukewarm. It's lukewarm.

LUVVIE They be angry about shit like actual fair elections. We're angry because we're being killed in the streets.

GABOUREY You lost.

LUVVIE Who has the right to be angry if not us? Who? They all being babies. But no, the therapy piece, we must continue to beat the drum on therapy. I've had a few people actually say because I've mentioned therapy on a casual way they've gone out to look for therapists. So anytime one of us talks about therapy, I'm like yes, I hope it actually pushes one other person, one more person, to go find a therapist because we can't carry all this weight by ourselves. It's too heavy.

GABOUREY I talk to everybody about therapy. I don't care if you feel ... I'm not even reading the room to see if you need. I don't do that. I'm not assessing you. I'm not judging nobody. I'm like, "Look, I got a dope therapist who if you don't want to see her, I'm sure she has reference ..." I'm not assessing anybody, being like, "You seem sad." I'm not doing that. I'm like, "Listen, there's therapy out here. You should just try it. Or if you don't want it or if you already have it, you can push this to somebody else." I'm on a mission to make

sure everybody gets their brain together because it is extremely hard to be a person. It's just hard to be a person.

LUVVIE Yes. And therapy is cardio for your mind. It is cardio for your mind. You are going to the gym for your spirit. Okay. Your spirit needs to be worked out in that session. So I'm with it.

And then, one of the reasons why I have you as a guest on this podcast is because I consider you a professional troublemaker. And that for me is a high compliment.

GABOUREY Thank you.

LUVVIE So what would you consider professional troublemaker?

GABOUREY Gosh. I think it's so easy to be a troublemaker. Especially if you're a woman. Especially if you're a Black woman. The easiest way to be a troublemaker is say, "Oh, no thank you." I've been called a bitch because I said, "Oh, no thank you. I'm actually good." Like I'm a diva, I'm all these things because I didn't want to do the thing that you wanted me to do. Or I felt uncomfortable and so I said ... I think it's so easy to be a troublemaker if you value your own comfort above a stranger's.

LUVVIE Ooh.

GABOUREY Which I do a lot. I do not like being hugged. And I feel like during the COVID situation where it turns out I'm right ... You know what I mean? I'm right. People are like, "Oh, hi. I'm a hugger." Like ... I'm not. I have to be like ... I do a thing where people try to hug me and I go, "Oh, hi." And I put out my hand. And they get a little embarrassed. I don't want to embarrass anyone. I just also don't want to be hugged because I'm uncomfortable with a stranger wrapping their body around my body.

LUVVIE Same. Oh my god, same. I even put this in my book. I literally put this in my book. For people who don't like hugging strangers, who then become visible, then we're considered rude when people are like, "Oh my god, so nice to meet you." Why are we mashing bodies when I don't know you?

GABOUREY My body, your body, squeezing. What is this?

LUVVIE What is this?

GABOUREY No. What is this stuff?

LUVVIE Not good with it. Friends, and family, all right, let's hug. But random person whose name I don't know, it makes me deeply uncomfortable.

GABOUREY Yeah. I'll hug my friends, I hug my family. I don't have a problem with a hug in general. I don't like a specific stranger hug. Also if I hate you don't force me to hug you. What are we doing? You know I don't fuck with you. Don't force me to hug you. But for the most

part ... And I also do a thing where if I'm meeting someone for the first time I'll shake their hand. If we're talking for a while, like not five minutes but a while, and we're having a night together or whatever, I'll hug you then because now you're not a stranger.

LUVVIE Yes. Correct. Yes.

GABOUREY Don't look at me like I'm crazy because I don't want you to wrap your actual limbs and breasts and chests around my breasts and chests and squeezing. That's what a hug is. That's crazy. You're a stranger. Your musk is not used to my musk. I'm not okay with it.

LUVVIE That's it.

GABOUREY And in the COVID world, we're right. Look at them hugger ass people out here talking about I'm a hugger. Now you've got it. No. It's on you.

LUVVIE No. You are speaking my actual language. This is my actual ... I have literally talked about this. I put it in my new book because I was like, "Can we talk about boundaries and why everybody thinks everybody should want to hug?" When it's like, "I'm a hugger." Okay. I'm a Capricorn. What that got to do with something? Are we just throwing out random adjectives? Is that what we're doing today? Like congrats. Like okay.

GABOUREY And those I'm a hugger ass people do not give you the opportunity to ... I'm going to use a strong word. Okay, trigger warning. It's rape. I'm not going to be forced into a hug. I'm not going to do it. Because how do we also teach children that your body belongs to you? Your decisions with your body are your body so when other people try to touch your body when you don't want them to, you need to tell an adult. You need to say no. Because your body is your boundary.

LUVVIE That part.

GABOUREY Hug your auntie. Hug her. Hug your aunt.

LUVVIE No. Don't make them hug the auntie.

GABOUREY Kiss her.

LUVVIE I hate that.

GABOUREY It's weird.

LUVVIE It's weird.

GABOUREY No. I don't want to. I don't want to be mean. I actually just feel really, really protective of my body currently. And moving forward, now that there's a vaccine ... Honestly, I'm like, "Oh, we can't go outside until it's available at the Walgreens." However, moving

forward, until into 5051, do not force strangers to hug you. You have no idea what kind of body issues people have. You have no idea what kind of intimacy issues people have. You have no idea what's going on. Just because you're a hugger doesn't mean that you should force other people to hug you.

LUVVIE That part.

GABOUREY Troublemaker.

LUVVIE Boom. There it is. Look, drop the mic yo. Drop the mic. This is so dope. Thank you so much for joining me on Professional Troublemaker Gabby. This was great.

GABOUREY Thanks so much for having me.

She is SO DOPE. I loved hearing how she got her start in acting, because it is absolutely clear that God and the Universe intervened so that we could have Gabby in a space where she could cause some good trouble. And I'm so glad I finally got to talk with her about the viral video I shared from her talk – both of us were in tears over what it led to. The freedom to tell her own story, claim her own narrative and not depend on the whims of the entertainment industry to make her way in the world. So good.

Be sure to follow Gabby on social media. She's @gabby3shabby on Instagram and @gabbysibide on Twitter, and she is absolutely hilarious and inspiring. She's amazing. And thanks to Chicago Recording Company who I've been partnering with on all things radio voice – including the podcast and my audiobook for Professional Troublemaker.

Thank you for tuning in to another episode of the Professional Troublemaker podcast. If you loved what you heard, make sure you're subscribed to Professional Troublemaker in your podcast platform of choice. And share it with people. Let them know it is dope.

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Until next time, have the courage to speak your truth and show up as yourself. Create good trouble.