

PROFESSIONAL TROUBLEMAKER



with LUVVIE AJAYI JONES

Professional Troublemaker with Luvvie Ajayi Jones

Go Unafraid (with Bozoma Saint John) - Episode 14

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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 taken action, done scary things and rocked the boat to an audacious life. 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."

This month, I'm pulling from the archives of the podcast from back when it was called Rants and Randomness and re-sharing some interviews with guests who are truly professional troublemakers. We are calling this Archive April, and first, I'm sharing my conversation with my bestie, my boo Badass Boz AKA Bozoma Saint John.

At the time of this interview in 2018, Boz had just started in her new role as the Chief Marketing Officer of Endeavor. Since that interview, Boz has continued being the absolute badass that she is, taking on a new role as Global Chief Marketing Officer for Netflix, teaching a course at Harvard Business School and also launching an online workshop called The Badass Workshop that providing tools and lessons for women to architect their best selves. Oh, and we also launched a global social movement together last summer with Glennon Doyle called Share the Mic Now that has gotten billions of impressions across the globe, has gotten so many offshoots, and it's been amazing.

Being a professional troublemaker means choosing to show up as your whole self, unapologetically, no matter what room you're in. And no one does that better than Boz. So, enjoy listening to this conversation with the Bawse of Badassery, Bozoma Saint John.

Conversation with Bozoma Saint John

LUVVIE What up girl?

BOZOMA Yes, hi Luvvie. Whoo!

LUVVIE Hey boo.

BOZOMA I'm so excited.

LUVVIE Let me give people your official bio so they understand you know what I mean so you can walk in here strutting. Bozoma Saint John began her career in advertising working for industry titans including Arnold Worldwide before making her way to PepsiCo, where she led the company's entertainment marketing efforts. During her tenure at PepsiCo, she managed brand integrations with media juggernauts, and you know that whole Beyoncé Super Bowl thing? Yes she was the woman behind that you know what I mean, epic. Okay and after nearly a decade at PepsiCo, she was at Beats Music, and then went to Apple Music, and then she joined Uber as Chief Brand Officer in 2017, and recently she joined Endeavor as its Chief Marketing Officer and will oversee marketing efforts across the company's portfolio. This chick is over here, they done picked her as like Best Dressed in Silicon Valley, Adage's 50 Most Creative People. y'all her resume is ridiculous; just stupid. So hey boo.

BOZOMA Hi. Exactly, tell 'em.

LUVVIE You're team scatter dem, just scattering them left and right.

BOZOMA Exactly, that's correct. Pepper dem, pepper dem gang.

LUVVIE Pepper dem, yes. Okay so I'm wondering like what did you want to do when you were growing up?

BOZOMA Ooh, right so because you know I'm West African, my parents wanted me to be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. I feel like most people feel that way. So I just picked the one that was like closest. I was like, "Okay I'll be a doctor then. I don't know, that sounds pretty good." I happened to be good in sciences and math. Although I'm not sure if I'm naturally gifted in science and math or if it's just because my dad would like you know lock me in my room and tell me to like you know study the encyclopedia every day you know what I'm mean. It's like not quite sure if it's like nurture or nature but for whatever reason I did really well in science and math, so it felt like you know medicine might be my calling, that's what I decided. I mean I took it all the way through, I was admitted, I went to college as pre-med, I applied to med school and got in, like the whole thing.

LUVVIE What?!

BOZOMA I went far. I went really far with this ruse, this lie.

LUVVIE Yo I feel like—I actually had a question in here that was like, "Did you get the pressure to be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer?" And you already said it because that is the universal African story. You know I was also going to be a doctor and then—.

BOZOMA Were you really? We're such a disappointment.

LUVVIE Girl yeah. Look at us now. We are disappointments. See I dropped my ruse way earlier than you did. Like my freshman year in college, I got the D in Chemistry, and I was like, "You know what, we're done here."

BOZOMA Oh wow.

LUVVIE I ain't gone be—yeah nah.

BOZOMA Yeah no, no.

LUVVIE So you actually applied to med schools?

BOZOMA Yes, yes. I mean I did the whole thing. I did orgo chem, I did all of it. I applied to med school, yeah, took the MCAT, I really went, I really tried.

LUVVIE You tried?

BOZOMA But you know what happened is that in college I was also that—that may not be a surprise to anyone now, but that chick that threw all the parties. So I was the one, and I lived my first year, actually my first and second year in college, I lived in a house called the Malcolm X House.

LUVVIE Okay.

BOZOMA Which was on Wesleyan University's campus and my upbringing had been in Colorado Springs, Colorado where you know wasn't very diverse and there were no real you know, not a lot of Black people running around. So by the time I got to college I was like, "Oh Malcolm X House, this sounds like the place I need to be."

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA Well yeah it was the place to be and it was also the place where I threw a lot of parties. I mean I did a whole lot of stuff. So coming into that space and knowing that you know I was definitely excited by the things that were more social and where I would call like more pop culture, you know I would organize like concerts. By the way, I brought Jay-Z to the campus.

LUVVIE Word?

BOZOMA To the cafeteria, yep. During my junior year, which was a disaster. Any case it was just one of those things that you know all the things that I was spending a lot of my emotional time with were what you know really where my heart was right. The things that I was doing in the classroom during my study time just felt like it was such a burden and I really wanted to a break between college and you know starting med school because I just knew I needed to like double down on you know just concentrating. And so that's what I told my parents, that I needed a little—I needed a year to explore New York and my—you know get some other work under my belt before I went to med school and unfortunately for them, they agreed.

LUVVIE And you never left.

BOZOMA Girl, never left. Okay 15 years later, I was like, "Ha ha, tricked ya!"

LUVVIE Tricked you. Like were your parents ever the ones who were like do or die like sink or swim? Were you actually feeling the pressure of, “I cannot disappoint them?”

BOZOMA Oh yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I felt that a lot. And hell, I think if I could admit, I still feel it today you know. The need to you know make them proud you know that everything that they’ve done. Everything that I do is a reflection of them and you know and so I still feel that pressure all the time. I mean yeah it’s never left really.

LUVVIE It’s funny when you win awards and your mom is there, hey shout out to mama Aba, my Ghanaian mamma—.

BOZOMA Yes.

LUVVIE You be like she’s just there to basically look amazing. You can tell she’s proud but African parent, their level of proud is different.

BOZOMA Oh my goodness. Girl listen, they’re the most boasting, exaggerating people on the planet okay. You know it’s like and the funny thing is I’m like, “Mom the award is amazing already. Like you don’t have to add to it,” you know what I mean? Like it doesn’t need any extra encomium as they would say you know.

LUVVIE They’d be like, “My daughter is the president of a company.”

BOZOMA Oh yeah. Oh yeah, yeah, oh absolutely. You know the year I gave the Apple keynote.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA Which was you know a big deal because you know no Black woman had ever been on the stage and you know there was all these other things happening and so there were lots of articles written and I talked to my dad that night, who was very surprised by the way because up until that point he still thought I was a complete failure you know. So he was so shocked, like, “Hey so you are good at this thing eh?” I was like, “Daddy are you serious? Like yes I’m you know what I’m actually pretty successful thank you very much.” But and by the way, it’ll keep you humble you know what I mean.

LUVVIE It keeps you so humble.

BOZOMA Because after that day, you can imagine, like I got so many you know texts and messages from people telling you you’re the greatest ever and then you talk to your dad and he’s like, “Yes, so this thing it’s working out eh?” You know what I mean it keeps you grounded.

But any case, I asked him that that day, you know I got a call from a distant family member who was like, “I was talking to your father and he said that you are now the CEO of Apple,” and I was like, “Yo no, that’s Tim Cook. Okay I am not the CEO of Apple,” but it was just hysterical because I’m like you know this was a big win, it was great for me and my career and you know it was great in and of itself but then he went and added to it.

LUVVIE Added extra.

BOZOMA For no reason.

LUVVIE They have to add the extra.

BOZOMA Right.

LUVVIE And you know what's funny? They never tell us that they're proud of us, they tell other people.

BOZOMA Oh of course.

LUVVIE We find out from other people.

BOZOMA We find out accidentally that they're proud.

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA You know that they're proud. Oh yeah, yeah, and the thing is that they are proud you know because this is what they have worked for right.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA And by the way it's like this interesting, ironic thing where it's like you can you know, as long as you're achieving something, they're probably going to boast about you, they're just not telling you.

LUVVIE They're just not telling you.

BOZOMA You know what I mean? It's like any achievement you know it's like it's even happening with my daughter now where it's like she's just finishing third grade and they have like her school awards and whatnot and she—even though I travel a lot and sometimes I do travel with her, she really hasn't missed a day of school this year. So she got the award for like perfect attendance or whatnot.

LUVVIE Oh Lael!

BOZOMA Yes I mean adorable. So of course my mother tells the world that you know because she hadn't missed a day of school, she's now the teacher's assistant in the classroom, and I'm like, "That's not true. Okay, that's not true. That's actually a lie. You know she's not assisting anybody okay."

LUVVIE Lord.

BOZOMA It's hysterical because it's like even the smallest achievements are you know a big deal and they would love to boast about that.

LUVVIE You know it's funny like Africans, we humble each other. So the Voltron Tribe, we are just a bunch a useless people.

BOZOMA Yes, Voltron.

LUVVIE The way we even compliment each other is ridiculous.

BOZOMA Oh my God.

LUVVIE Like we talk about how our parents are ridiculous about how they do. We'll be like, "Ah so you're not just useless all the time. Eh hey, congrats."

BOZOMA Exactly and "Congratulations on your lack of uselessness." And it's like wait is that a compliment? I don't understand.

LUVVIE Is that a compliment? And you're like thank.

BOZOMA Yeah does that feel better?

LUVVIE So first of all, my mom calls you "Badass," just so you know, and as you go through the world as Badass Boz and you—

BOZOMA Oh my God, first of all I'm sorry, I've got to interrupt you because the fact that your mom called me badass, I don't know if I should also be proud or embarrassed. I don't know, it kind of makes me feel like pride and shame.

LUVVIE She's like, "How is Badass?" Seriously mom?

BOZOMA Oh my God, I love it.

LUVVIE You made my mom curse, congrats.

BOZOMA Oh man, I know right. That's what I'm saying, I don't know if I should be proud of that or like ashamed.

LUVVIE I think both. I think both.

BOZOMA Okay, well I'll take it. I'll take it. I'll take it.

LUVVIE So like you're walking through this world this badass Boz, you're like getting on planes wearing kente dresses in Silicon Valley. You're walking in these meetings with big hair, red lipstick, just like fully yourself, and it's not been easy.

BOZOMA Right.

LUVVIE Like what gives you the courage to be able to show up as yourself every day?

BOZOMA Ooh girl, right. I mean that's a really good question. You know because we have been, especially I think for Black women, you know let's just start there, where you know we have been so indoctrination, indoctrination of our image you know as not good enough has like permeated. It's in our mind, you know it's in our psyche. It then shows up in how we behave and how we excel because we're just constantly told that being ourselves is not good enough. And so you take that in subconsciously even. You know it's like your hair is not good enough, your butt's too big. You know it's like your voice is too loud. Your expressions are too wild. You know your passion is too strong. Like everything is just too, too, too much and so what happens is that we start to quiet all the—like anything else it's suppression of your greatness means that you really can't be great. You know you suppress all of those amazing, beautiful things about ourselves, and like how do we expect to excel? We're spending so much time in the energy of not being ourselves then how do you expect like your best ideas, or your best comments, or you know your best efforts to be present? It can't be, it's impossible. It's like physically not possible, chemically not possible, and so I recognized that pretty early that you know that I just wasn't able to really bring the best of myself unless I was bringing my whole self. Because that is really what the best is and I would be in these meetings and couldn't comment on anything happening or give my opinion on any of the ideas in the room because I was busy trying to formulate how I was going to say it but I didn't want to say it the way I would say it. I wanted to say it the way that the guy next to me would say it. How in the hell am I supposed to be psychic on that?

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA So what would happen literally is I would say nothing in the whole meeting. I would spend the whole time thinking about, "Well how do I exactly say this so it sounds more like him and less like me," you know? And then you'd miss out on the whole opportunity. I would walk out of meetings and I would often get reviews that said like, "Boz you don't contribute. You know we don't—you don't have great ideas," but meanwhile I know I got the best ideas okay.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA But I wasn't able to communicate them and so after a few of those sorts of conversations, I just you know, I realized that I had to just say it. You know in the moment and it was scary you know? It was like scary, scary, scary in those first few years of trying to practice that, and by the way nothing is overnight.

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA You know it wasn't like I decided and then next day I was like awesome.

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA You know it took a while and for me with practice, and sometimes it's no practice. You know when you're in rooms that seem so large with people who seem so impressive you know and knowing that your ideas are as worthy as theirs.

LUVVIE Yep.

BOZOMA Or your opinion is as worthy as theirs and having to practice that and knowing that like, “Okay, I’ve got to open my mouth and say what I want to say. It doesn’t matter how I think it’s going to sound or how I think they’re going to react, I’ve got to say it.”

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA And you’d be surprised more often than not that idea really is the winner and people will really look at you almost as surprised, which is a whole nother conversation.

LUVVIE Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BOZOMA But look up and say, “Oh wow, okay yes that idea, yeah cool, that sounds amazing.” You know and that’s how you get the best ideas across.

LUVVIE I think people are just so used to seeing other people and seeing themselves wearing masks that you stand out in a way that’s besides the fact that you’re like 5’10, you’re chocolate—.

BOZOMA Amen.

LUVVIE You be having like the bombest hair. People legit be shocked when you walk in the room because I’ve been in rooms where people were like, “She dares to be this person,” and it always shocks me because I’m always like, “Why are people stunned that she’s this person,” or like, “I’m this person,” it’s because we don’t see it enough. What do you tell the woman who’s like, “Yo I have to wear a mask every day to succeed.” What do you tell her?

BOZOMA Wow. Well the things that I really want to encourage, and this is the part about the bravery and sometimes being the only or the few right, which is that none of us can do it by ourselves.

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA You know there are a few people who can do it and that’s okay. I mean there’s nothing wrong with like, “Oh my God, I’m afraid I can’t do it by myself,” that’s okay. You know this is not, this is not a shaming conversation.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know but we do need help and so most of the time I feel like if I am even virtually helping someone else show up, and by the way, sometimes those are my favorite comments on Instagram or anywhere else. People are like, “Girl, you know today I wore my six inch heels to the office,” I would be like, “Yes! Like yes, you get it. You strut up and down those hallways,” you know and I’m snatching air. You know?

LUVVIE Yes.

BOZOMA I'm happy when I see that because I think it really does take encouragement of each other to take down those masks you know and I wish that more of us would be able to do it more often. That way we can be unstoppable you know. It's like it only looks weird if I'm the only one doing it.

LUVVIE Correct. Correct.

BOZOMA You know if we're all doing it. If we're all wearing out natural hair. If we're all—well hell by the way, no judgment on that either because I do love myself a weave and a wig, and a jheri curl.

LUVVIE A good bundle. A good bundle.

BOZOMA Listen, bundles, I got bundles under my sink right now. Like—but if we all show up in exactly the kind of way this black girl magic that we possess, then it won't be so weird you know.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA Like we'll shock them with our brilliance instead of shocking them with our strangeness. You know so for me I want to make sure that it's no longer strange, it's not an oddity. This is magic, it's not a surprise, like I'm not the only one who possesses it you know?

LUVVIE Amen.

BOZOMA Luvvie possesses it, Yvonne possesses it. You know like we are able to show up because we have the capacity to do it and it should be celebrated instead of stared it.

LUVVIE Correct.

BOZOMA So for me, I want to make sure that like yes I'm representing that but that I'm also encouraging me sisters to do that too.

LUVVIE We got to normalize being our authentic selves. We got to normalize that.

BOZOMA Yes. Normalize being our authentic selves. That's an amazing, amazing way to put it.

LUVVIE Just be the people that we are. Now you've, you've had some like high profile moves. You've made some super high profile moves, and last year you went—.

BOZOMA That's correct because I want to be seen girl.

LUVVIE Girl, listen you out here. So you went from Apple to Uber. Now I know that was a tough decision.

BOZOMA Yep.

LUVVIE Because people look at Apple as like the grand place right? The ivory tower and at the time that you moved to Uber, it was in the middle of a lot of public challenges. Like what made you decide to take on that role and were you nervous that you were biting off more than you could chew like in the face of this public scandal?

BOZOMA Yeah. You know what's interesting too that I think looking backwards—and I love the think pieces of how people think I've created a career, because it wasn't, it wasn't necessarily strategic plan. You know I didn't have a plan that said, "Hey I'm going to do this and I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that." I'm walking in my own divine path.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know the one that was set for me and so again I don't look at other people's careers and say, "Oh well I want to do that, that, that," because it's not meant for me. You know I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and the way that I know that I'm walking in the right path is that I really do listen to my spirit. You know other people call it your gut, your intuition, all of that, I go where I know I'm called, and so when I met Travis Kalanick last spring I knew that that was the place I was supposed to go regardless of what the logic told me. You know this is why I've stopped creating pro's and con's lists, you know when people are like, "Oh should I make this move? Let's write all the pros down, let's write all the cons down."

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA It's like first of all you're quieting your spirit when you do that. You're rationalizing something that is probably not meant for you. You know what we should be doing is practicing listening to our intuition. So you sit down in a quiet room by yourself, concentrate, you know, listen to your spirit. What is it telling you? Don't be afraid because when it's telling you go in this direction and you know that like, "Oh shit," like maybe that's looks too big or it's too scary or whatnot.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know it's like I love the saying like that you know, "The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you." You know that is a real thing. It's like so I go on afraid. If I feel it and I felt it the day I met Travis, then I know that's where I'm supposed to go. You know God is not going to take me into a place that I can't manage, and so I had that strong belief. So for me as I looked at the opportunity at Uber, it was also two-fold. One yes, my intuition, my spirit told me I should go there, but I knew that the conversation around diversity and sexual harassment, and all these challenges was a really important one for us to tackle.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know, that you know people said, "Oh burn the building down!" But honestly why do you want to do that? That just proves the fact that certain places we can't be in. No I don't want to do that. I want to go into a place and say, "Okay this is wrong but we're going to not like—we're going to take it over. We're not going to burn it down." Like I want to be in that place and

change it so that there is no company, no industry, no space that we are not allowed to be in. So for me, it's like it's really important that again we look at these brands and companies and not burn them down. It's like who's going to go in. And by the way, let's not just send one person, let's send a hundred.

LUVVIE Right.

BOZOMA And let's go fix that shit. You know?

LUVVIE Storm the castle.

BOZOMA Yes, storm the castle. Yes. Let's go right in and let's all go in and make sure that we're changing it. And then the second part of it was for business reasons. You know there are very few chief executives who are black women.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA And the fact that I could occupy that seat, especially in tech, was really important to me. For both personally, for my career, you know in making sure that I was getting to that next rung on the ladder.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA But also again as a signal. You know that we are more than capable, highly qualified, and we should be given those seats, and by the way also call out the fact that it's an embarrassment. Why am I the only c-suite executive [unclear]? That doesn't make any sense.

LUVVIE That's crazy, that's crazy.

BOZOMA And so for me I'm like let's change this conversation. You know let's change the conversation. So yeah, so for a number of reasons. Yeah I felt like I felt it in my spirit and I knew that I would be able to go there and have the grace to sustain all of it that was coming.

LUVVIE So after a year what makes you think your job is done? You've moved on to Endeavor and left Uber behind. What made you make that decision?

BOZOMA Well, the job isn't done. You know let's be clear about that, it's definitely not done. Perhaps somebody else can follow behind me you know.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA The doors open.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA So storm the castle you know. Somebody should go and continue the work, and by the way there's so many talented tech women you know.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA Especially women of color. So my hope, and by the way I've said this publicly, I said it to the CEO, that my hope is that we have Black women who are considered for that role after me, and that any criticism or you know notion that you know, "Oh, well one didn't make it. Now we got another one," should not be listened to.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know because at this point we're here trying to get critical numbers up for these roles and so why should it be replaced by a white man? It shouldn't be.

LUVVIE Oh come on. It should not be.

BOZOMA And so we need, we need the door open, and so my hope is that the opportunity will be given to somebody else to try their hand at it. But for me it just wasn't the right time. You know that the needs of the business, the needs of operation. You know there were lots and lots of other things that were happening that needed to be fixed and I wanted to make sure that wherever I am I'm creating big impact.

You know I'm really proud of the work that I did in the time that I was there. You know we worked with LeBron and had an amazing moment in Uber where he and Kevin Durant were talking about being you know what it means to be a Black man in America, and LeBron said some things that pissed off some journalist on Fox News or whatnot and you know she recalled the conversation saying he should just, "Shut up and dribble," which became its own cultural moment. That wouldn't have happened if I wasn't sitting in the chief seat at Uber. You know that I funded that conversation and also gave the chance for Cari Champion, who is a brilliant journalist at ESPN, but doesn't get nearly the credit she deserves or the spotlight. You know I put her in the driver's seat, literally in the driver's seat in that commercial and in subsequent commercials, to also have her moment you know. It increased her profile even within ESPN, to know that she's a personality and someone who can you know shine in a commercial.

So for me I'm really proud of some moments that I had there and able to really work with some incredible people but I'm really excited about the future. You know I don't think it's any you know secrets that Hollywood also needs some help.

LUVVIE Sure does.

BOZOMA You know and if I'm a storyteller, which is what I consider myself, a chief storyteller, I want to be able to also influence the places where these narratives are being created.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA

So now that I'm at Endeavor, which has you know some of the biggest talents in the world and some of the most influential companies, hopefully we'll be able to create some additional narratives in this marketing seat that will again extend our stories in much more impactful ways.

Before we jump into today's interview, know that this podcast is named after my second New York Times bestselling book, [*Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual*](#), which is available now wherever you get your books!

Think of it! A million people who are out there, standing on the edge of something great and need that little push of encouragement. That push to be the domino. To say the hard thing. To have the hard conversation. A million people kicking their fear to the curb and step into the life they've been dreaming of. A million people asking for a raise. A million people starting a fierce job they're not sure they're ready for. A million people doing something so big that their wildest dreams say goals. My goodness.

And that is what writing this book has done for me, what it's already done for those who are reading it and gifting it to others. This book has empowered people to say yes to things they were previously saying no to. It's empowered people to have tough conversations they weren't going to have before. People have asked for raises and promotions and gotten them after reading this book and finding the courage to speak up. The domino effect of what has been happening when a few people have decided not to live in the realm of fear has been amazing - think of what could happen if a million people stopped letting fear be the first factor in their decision making?

An audacious mission like that can't happen without you, so let's get this book in the hands of people who need it. Buy a copy of Professional Troublemaker for yourself, or as a gift for your friend who needs a push. I know it will change your life like it's changed mine and I know it will change the lives of all these people who touch it, because domino effects are real. Order Professional Troublemaker (hardcover or audiobook) now at PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com or wherever you buy books.

LUVVIE

When you look at where you are now. Like you've risen up the ladder, all that good stuff, and you celebrate your wins loudly and it's because you remember the past struggles. Like when you reflect, what—at what point was the struggle almost too real? Where you were like, I don't even know if I'm going to make it?

BOZOMA

Ooh girl, there's been many of those moments, many of those moments. I mean there are—because you know the real challenge also psychologically for me and I think for a lot of Black women in corporate and are in these business is that there isn't a great support structure you know. So when you have a failure, there's no one for you to honestly and openly talk to.

LUVVIE

Yeah.

BOZOMA You know you've got to put on the brave face and say, "Oh yeah, you know what I might have failed but here is the learning," you know. You can't like openly cry.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know or mope around for a couple of weeks. You know for somebody else to pat you on the back and say, "Oh it'll be alright." You know because the moment you slip and admit that you may have made the wrong decision or maybe it didn't go as well as you thought, you're going to get the pile on of people who are like, "See I told you she wasn't smart enough. I told you she wasn't good enough. She shouldn't even be in that job." You know so psychologically for us we don't have this freedom to be able to be honest about these failures that then could become learnings for us.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA And so for me it's been a struggle to find the right support network so that I can actually honestly and openly get feedback, which will make me better, and strong, etcetera. But yeah I do feel that there are lots of moments where I ponder whether or not you know I'm cut out for it. And a lot of times where now I feel like it's a superpower of mine and it eludes back to the point you made about me celebrating myself. I'm my biggest cheerleader and I'm my biggest advocate. There's no one in the world who can make me feel better than myself.

LUVVIE Yes.

BOZOMA Literally, you know I shoot listen, I look at myself in the mirror, sometimes I'm like, "Girl you just, why you so damn fine. Like seriously, God!" Or like I come up with an amazing idea and I'm like, "Yo like ain't nobody smarter than me. Get out of here. Like this is what?!" You know but that's also practice.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know because we have the voices in our head that do tell us that like, "Ooh girl you need to you know you need to put them fries down. You know that idea is not really that cute. You know don't say it out loud to anybody because you going to be made fun of." You know it takes practice but also practice that self-love and that self-celebration so that when the mistakes come or the failures come and you feel terrible, and you feel like maybe you're not going to make it, that you're also the one who is encouraging yourself. That you can get back out there, that you can try again tomorrow, that it wasn't devastating. You know that you can learn from the issue and that's really, really important for us to survive.

LUVVIE Do you still have imposter syndrome sometimes?

BOZOMA Not really.

LUVVIE Yes. Yes, I love that answer.

BOZOMA No, no. You know what part of it is, and again I feel like this is a habit that has been formed over time, which is that usually, and it applies to me too, that we look at an opportunity or a job or room, or a project, and we need to check off every box in preparation for that thing because like we don't fail at it. You know so by the time you get into the room, by the time you get the job, you are so overqualified for it that it's almost easy. You know what I mean. Like I can step into rooms now or jobs and just like, well of course I should have this job. Of course I should be in this room. I'm, I'm more prepared than any of you. You know so imposter syndrome, I don't really suffer with because I do feel over prepared most times for most jobs and for most meetings even now.

LUVVIE See most people would be like, "Yeah I do," you're like, "Nah I'm good."

BOZOMA Yes I'm good. Yes I'm good.

LUVVIE So what do you think is the biggest misconception that people have about you, or your work, or just the space you take-up?

BOZOMA Ooh, well, well that's a multi-answer I feel like. I think people see my work or see you know the results of my work and think it's really shiny and really glamorous, and don't realize the hard work that it takes. You know the sleepless nights, the real strategy, you know the smarts that it, that it requires in order to achieve, attain, and to sustain it. You know? That you know they tell you that all that glitters isn't gold. You know and it's true. It's like it's not gold. It's f*cking sweat. You know it's like it's blood, it's tears. So my glitter is made up of all of that pain and sacrifice and hard work. You know it's not, it's not gold. And so for me I really try hard to, yes celebrate myself, celebrate my wins, like show the fabulousity of the lifestyle and the whole thing, but all of that is backed up. You know it's like, it's not a mirage.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA So when you poke at the dream, like there's substance back there and I think that's a misconception. Some people have tried it and I'll, I'll shoot listen I'll correct you in a second.

LUVVIE Because people see all the traveling, all the like, "Oh my God," not realizing that you're missing Leal's school play.

BOZOMA Correct.

LUVVIE Or you're missing sleep because you have to go catch another flight.

BOZOMA Yes. Correct. Or the fact that like yes I may have gone to London, but I turned around that trip in two days, met with 16 people in a matter of 17 hours because I actually do have to get back to see her play. You know so as far as other people are able to and by the way some of my colleagues are able to spend that into the weekend and like go out and have a great time, like you don't see me in the clubs in London. You don't, because all I've done is meet back to back to back to back and then got back on the plane and went home. You know so again it's like there is I think some misconception about what it actually takes to maintain the lifestyle and to really have it all. It ain't easy man.

LUVVIE So what do you want people to say about—well actually no. What do you think people say about you when you're not in the room?

BOZOMA That's an interesting question.

LUVVIE Because I think that's what a brand is right, and you have a brand.

BOZOMA Yeah, yeah.

LUVVIE So?

BOZOMA I think people say that I am magnetic. You know and that my ideas are powered by my ability to put shine on it. You know that it's some sort of ethereal thing that they can't put a handle on. Like quite often it's funny, it's like I know that's true because it comes back to me. You know where people are like, "Well you tell the idea or you sell it because only you can do that." By the way I love that. I love that because it's my own brand right. It's like, "Well you can't do what I do."

LUVVIE Hey because special sauce!

BOZOMA Exactly. It's my own special brand. You know that somehow I have something magical and I—sometimes I struggle with the word magic because it makes it sound nonhuman.

LUVVIE Yep it makes it sound like luck.

BOZOMA You know or not smart or accidental. Yeah I'm like, "No it's not accidental at all," but there is something to that because it does make me uniquely qualified then to do what I do.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know these last two jobs that I've had, actually no let me take that back, three: Apple, Uber, and now Endeavor, no one has occupied this seat before me.

LUVVIE Wow. Yep, each one.

BOZOMA All the jobs that—each one, these are jobs that were created for me.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA Wait no, let me take it back a step further, Pepsi, my last job at Pepsi, which was the head of music entertainment, no one had had that job before me either.

LUVVIE Wow.

BOZOMA Oh my God, I just realized that right now.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA My last four high powered jobs, no one has had the job before me.

LUVVIE They literally created it for you. Holy sh*t.

BOZOMA That requires magic. That requires people to believe that you have something special that no one else has, therefore create something new just for you, tailored made to fit for you. So I encourage that perception.

LUVVIE You better come one anointing. Okay.

BOZOMA Okay.

LUVVIE Come on favor. That is favor. That is some special favor right there. See this is what I'm saying. I feel like things happen in the way they're supposed to happen in the way they're ordered.

BOZOMA Yes, that's right.

LUVVIE That's it.

BOZOMA Yes, that's right, the way they're ordered. Yes.

LUVVIE I didn't not realize your last four jobs—holy smokes. Wow.

BOZOMA Yeah, my last four jobs.

LUVVIE They actually created each position.

BOZOMA Yeah.

LUVVIE That's incredible.

BOZOMA Yeah.

LUVVIE That is incredible.

BOZOMA Amen.

LUVVIE And I love the fact that I have you in my squad because being able to go up ladders and have these careers and be visible, it's good to have somebody to be able to like compare notes with. Like which is why I love Voltron so much.

BOZOMA Yes.

LUVVIE Because we're able—we're like in the perfect alignment in each other's lives because we happen to support each other and like lift each other up. It's like what's the point of being at the top if you can't have a party with your friends?

BOZOMA Correct! Yes! What's the point? Ain't' no fun if the homies can't have none.

LUVVIE If the homies can't have none, okay.

BOZOMA Now I think they were talking about something else.

LUVVIE I know right.

BOZOMA But we're reinterpreting for ourselves.

LUVVIE We are, we are, we absolutely are. And a lot of times we get messages from people who are like, "Yo like y'all are encouraging me to be exactly who I am and be the African person that I am." Our West African-ness is—you know what's funny? Like Wakanda made being an African cool.

BOZOMA Oh my God, it made it so cool, so cool.

LUVVIE And we're all like remember when it wasn't cool.

BOZOMA Listen I remember those days very clearly.

LUVVIE Girl.

BOZOMA But you know also there's something to that though, where I feel like again this is the point about bringing your whole self. You know being unabashed about it, which is that you know Wakanda may have made us all want to go live there and made people who maybe didn't necessarily didn't pay attention before you know want to go live in Wakanda. But honestly I think it's the shine of everyone's who's excelling and proud of their heritage that's actually making it sustainable.

LUVVIE Yep.

BOZOMA You know it's like I give credit to you, to Yvonne, to Abiola, even though Issa's not in the Voltron, you know like all, all the people who are not afraid to exhibit their African-ness. David Oyelowo, I mean come on now.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA Lupita, you know we can just keep naming names. And I do feel like there is such a strength in being able to celebrate where you're from and that's why when people are like, "I want to join Voltron," I'm like, "Start your own damn Voltron." You know what I'm saying, like come on. You don't need to be a part of ours, start your own thing. You know like celebrate whoever you are.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA Like do that, that's great.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know and I really do think that all of that excitement you know in this very moment, I do want to make sure it's sustainable.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA You know I want Lael to grow up and be proud of being half-Ghanaian you know and that she uses that. I hope she has her own Voltron and you know is waving her Ghanaian flag.

LUVVIE We might have to create Voltron mini.

BOZOMA I know right, Voltron Junior.

LUVVIE Voltron Junior. So we can—.

BOZOMA Voltron Next.

LUVVIE Voltron 2.0 and we'll call them useless too all day every day.

BOZOMA Every day, every day. Exactly.

LUVVIE Every day. And you're raising this little like Afropolitan who likes travel like nobody's business, she got like all this taste, what makes you proudest of Lael?

BOZOMA Oh, you know Lael is such a great person.

LUVVIE She is.

BOZOMA She really is. She's a great person. You know I was talking to somebody the other day and I said I like Lael, and they totally dismissed it, and I was like, "No, don't dismiss it," that's actually a point.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA I'm like, "I love her of course because she's my child and you know I love her, there's no question about it, but I like her." You know, like if she was not my child, I would like her to be my friend.

LUVVIE Yes.

BOZOMA You know that like I really like her as a human being, and so that's probably what I'm most proud of. It has nothing to do with me. It's nothing to do with anything I've done in her life but that her spirit is such a likeable one and that she's just a good person. I'm very, very proud of that.

LUVVIE She is, she's really good to kick it with. We be out here like, we be taking Lael places, just because.

BOZOMA Okay, exactly. She be hanging, she be hanging.

LUVVIE She be hanging, taking all the pictures.

BOZOMA Oh yes.

LUVVIE Oh she's good with that, she be taking good pictures.

BOZOMA Oh God, I got to get a poll, the selfies—I got to help her with that.

LUVVIE Lord. So as you're doing all of this stuff, you know I be getting on you on this, like how are you taking care of yourself?

BOZOMA Of myself? Yes.

LUVVIE Uhm hmm girl.

BOZOMA Ooh okay, so here's the real truth right: is that I love to sleep. I really do. I know it appears as if I'm not sleeping because I'm everywhere, but you won't catch me out here in these streets when I am tired. I need a full eight hours. I am not one of these people who brags about sleeping for four hours. By the way which is not healthy and not possible. Actually, it is possible for like 1% of human beings who have an actual genetic mutation, okay.

LUVVIE Yeah.

BOZOMA The rest of us, you actually do need seven to eight hours a night in order to get your full functioning back. So I am not afraid to go to an event and dip out at 11 o'clock because I'm like, "I got to go to sleep," okay.

LUVVIE I can testify to that. I can testify to that. I've seen Boz—let me tell y'all about Boz. Boz has tried to sneak out of an event in all her glory, like in the middle of an event and my—I said, I caught, I was like, "Ma'am you're not sneaking out of here. Everybody sees you leaving. There's no way you and all your tallness, in all your big hairness, and your long nail-ness is sneaking out. You're not sneaking out. You're a foolish peasant."

BOZOMA Luvvie, let me say something. Sometimes, listen sometimes I try, so I try it because you know it's hard to get out of spaces and they won't let you leave. So I try to sneak out and they're like, "We can see you because we see you with your bag and your hair, is walking out the door," and I recognize that. But you know that's why I'm unashamed, that's why I got to tell people up front. I'm coming to your event but guess what I am going to leave in an hour okay? So let's just make sure whatever I need to be doing in here, let's just make sure I'm doing it because the clock is ticking. You know so yeah no, I like to show up to places, but I don't mess around with that, yo I need my sleep. I care mostly about my sleep, you know being recharged but mentally it is also about you know all the thing we've been talking about. Like how do I replenish my you know any challenges that I have, who do I go to? Voltron is clearly a very important part of that. My sister circle is really important part of that. The people that I can be honest and clear with you know I do pray a lot actually. You know a little bit of meditation, a little bit of prayer to just center me, and like I was saying before you know being able to follow my spirit. It's not just about the job moves, you know those major moments, it's also in the daily decisions. You know

there are some things where it's like you know you're in a meeting with somebody and it's just like you get some sense or something that tells you this person isn't all that. You know what I mean? It's like but you need to be in constant prayer and in constant meditation, things that I do in order to be able to identify that because I'm not trying to waste my time or make the wrong decision or the wrong step. And so I need to be able to be clear on you know a number of decisions that I need to make and so I spend a lot of time making sure that I'm centered and all of that is self-care for me.

LUVVIE Yes.

BOZOMA But like my food is really important. I don't like those salads and sandwiches. You know I'm truly West African, I try to have hot food all the time.

LUVVIE You're a true African.

BOZOMA So I eat—yes, I eat well. I eat really well for me, for my body.

LUVVIE Even though you eat Ghanaian jollof, but whatever.

BOZOMA Listen because Ghanaian jollof is nutritious.

LUVVIE It's alright.

BOZOMA And you people with your Nigerian jollof, there's nothing inside. Eh what are you eating? Just rice? Eh? Just rice?

LUVVIE Eh, eh, Naija's cook jollof, it starts off like this.

BOZOMA Me, me I need things inside of my jollof. You people you are dry, eh your food is dry.

LUVVIE Ay, see insult, save my life. Oh my God. Oh my God, the insult. Jesus. It's, it's fine.

BOZOMA I like how we've been having this very powerful conversation and it's going to disintegrate because of jollof.

LUVVIE Because of jollof wars. Like that's where it's like, ah really you are just going to insult my rice. It's fine. Next time I come to LA, mama Aba knows the only Ghanaian jollof I eat is Boz's mom's jollof. That's it.

BOZOMA I know it's hers. Listen and by the way Luvvie let me tell you, it's the moment of pride for her you know. She brags about that too, I hope you know this. She uses it in her own circle.

LUVVIE Yes.

BOZOMA She's like, "Eh even me, my jollof is so sweet that my Nigerian children they come and they eat it."

LUVVIE Yes

BOZOMA You know what I mean and I'm like, "Mommy, please, please don't say that. Like don't say that cause then you're looking for trouble."

LUVVIE No actually, no that is actually a point of pride because I didn't—I'm just stating the only Ghanaian jollof I will accept, the only one is mama Aba because hers is anointed.

BOZOMA Right.

LUVVIE And it's special Ghanaian jollof, everybody else's is no, I don't eat it, and Boz is right. She don't eat nothing, she don't eat nothing American. The girl is a bougie peasant. Boz, if you want to kill Boz, give her something that has cheese in it; just kill her dead.

BOZOMA Oh my God. Oh my God I can't, I can't. You know, no, no, I don't. No. Because you know what I think people pretend as if cheese is natural for Africans, it's not.

LUVVIE It's not. It's not.

BOZOMA It's not. Stop pretending. Okay, stop pretending. Let's all just get on it. Most of us have you know some sort of lactose intolerance or something so I just want to make sure that I am being true to my heritage and my DNA composition okay? Thank you very much.

LUVVIE So looking out for—.

BOZOMA It's a PSA.

LUVVIE PSA, hot food. Yeah no I, I actually still eat 70% African food. Like legit.

BOZOMA Yeah.

LUVVIE That's part of my self-care. If I go too long without rice, my rice levels drop low and things aren't right.

BOZOMA Right.

LUVVIE Like I need my rice levels to never drop low.

BOZOMA Correct.

LUVVIE So that is definitely a part of my self-care too. So I agree with that. Naija jollof though.

BOZOMA You know what, we just have to, we just have to have the last word. You know what it's your show so I'ma let you live.

LUVVIE That's it. Don't worry it's just one time because you've already insulted my rice. You insulted my rice.

BOZOMA We're still going to be friends though okay. Insults and all.

LUVVIE In spite of the jollof wars, we stand side by side as sisters.

BOZOMA Correct. Yes I will stand with you till the end Luvvie, you know this.

LUVVIE Correct, correct, and I am so proud of you and all the moves you make and how big they are and even the small ones and I am so excited to share you on along all of it.

BOZOMA Thank you Luvvie. I so appreciate you. This platform is incredible, we appreciate your voice and you know I just—by the way I love everyone who follows you and comments. I just sometimes go on your comments just to laugh and like take a break from the day because the kind of comedy that’s happening there is incredible.

LUVVIE Yo, they’re hysterical.

BOZOMA So thank you for everything you do.

LUVVIE They are hysterical. LuvvNation has no chill, no sense, just—.

BOZOMA NO chill, I love it, I love it.

LUVVIE They’re the best and I love you and yeah we’ll talk probably later today.

BOZOMA Yeah, exactly, I’ll see you in like five minutes.

LUVVIE Bye boo.

BOZOMA Okay bye.

“All that glitters is not gold – it’s blood, it’s tears, it’s sweat. My glitter is made up of pain, sacrifice and hard work.” Y’all, that is a word. That’s a word! When you see people out in the world winning, you’re not seeing everything that got them to that place in that time. It takes work, believing in yourself, fighting fear, having a squad that will loan you their courage. We do that for each other and I’m so grateful to have Boz in my corner.

If you want to get more inspiration and goodness from Boz, be sure to follow her on social media. She’s @badassboz on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Definitely follow along so you can get the details on what she’s doing and can pre-order her new book when that drops next year. You can learn directly from Boz with her Badass Workshop, and it’s allowing people to really uplevel their goals, their relationships, their career and their lives. Get signed up at [BadassWorkshop.com](#).

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