**Glasgow Women’s Library and FLUP the Podcast with Funmilola Fagbamila**

Hello, my name is Tomiwa Folorunso and this is Glasgow Women’s Library and FLUP the Podcast.

***MUSIC***

Whilst at FLUP literary festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I had the absolute pleasure of sitting down with Funmilola Fagbamila, she is a Nigerian American activist, playwright, author and scholar. She is currently an author of Pan African Studies at California State University, and she is also one of the original organisers of the Black Lives Matter Movement. So, as you can imagine and you will soon hear, this, just like Natasha, was such an inspirational and moving and useful conversation that we had. We spoke a lot about activism and activism online and protecting yourself and looking after yourself and self-care and about herself as a person and how she imagined herself when she was younger or how she didn’t imagine herself, and before I ramble on and give any spoilers I will just a huge thank you to Funmilola for your time, I truly appreciate it and I’m so excited to share this, so here is Glasgow Women’s Library and FLUP the podcast with Funmilola Fagbamila.

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**Tomiwa:** It’s really nice to be here with you in Brazil, I was wondering, I have researched you and I know who you are and I know what you do, but I would love, if you could, in your own words tell us, who you are and what you do?

**Funmilola:** Yes, so I’m excited to be here, brazil is wonderful and I’m glad to meet you Tomiwa. So, I am a playwright, a professor of Pan African Studies, I am trained as a sociologist, in terms of my academic work. I am one of the original members of Black Lives Matter which is a national network in the United States and also an international network essentially engaging in a critical way the condition of black people, specifically in the states and globally and the way in which anti-Black institutions inform our daily lives and what it takes to challenge those institutions and structures that are violent and harmful, and also just advocate for more love and peace, and just and helpfulness in society overall. My play, entitled “The Intersection: Woke Black Folk” engages the complexities of Black political identity, gender, mental health, religion, sexuality, economy, all of these kinds of conversations that are nuanced and complex and controversial, within Black America and within Black identity overall throughout the diaspora. I look at it head on and kind of place a mirror in front of Black America in a very particular way. And it’s also a story about the way which humans engage difference and the difficulty dealing with somebody who is different from you and how we are not really trained intellectually or emotionally to do difference very well. So that’s in essence what the play is about and my primary creative project at the moment.

**Tomiwa:** You’re also a contributor to the Netflix documentary, ‘Feminists: What were they thinking?’ and I am about a third of the way through it and I was watching it and it’s Jane Fonda and she talks about when she was a young girl and she spent a lot of time on her own and she talks about this moment when she would climb this tree in her back garden and she’d look out and she could imagine herself, and she says she saw herself on a stallion, leading into battle and I thought that was really nice and even myself as a young woman you often imagine your future self and I wondered if you can look back and if the self you are now is the one you imagine yourself to be?

**Funmilola:** Yes, I appreciate that question. I don’t know that I imagined myself to be anything very specific, I think that broadly I imagined myself to be a woman, a person that was going to move with integrity, that was going to be helpful in the world, because I felt that urge very early in life. Not to be the big, big activist person but to attempt to be helpful in whatever capacity I can be and to be as honest as possible and to be bold. Because I wasn’t necessarily bold when I was young but I knew that was what I wanted to become. That I wanted to find the willingness to do the things and say the things that might make me feel a little bit uncomfortable but that were true to who I knew I wanted to be, which was a more honest person. That can be a challenge. I still hold that charge to myself every day, to attempt to discover a part of me that’s more willing to be as honest as possible about what I see, what I feel and to do that, in a loving fashion and to attempt to make that helpful.

**Tomiwa:** Did you grow up in America?

**Funmilola:** I grew up in America. My parents moved to America in the early and mid-80s because my mom and dad came at different times, but I grew up in the states and I was born in 1990 in America.

**Tomiwa:** Was there, any particular moments or things or in your family that made you want to be bold, or recognise that you didn’t have this boldness?

**Funmilola:** Mmm, I think that I observed early on what it meant to be a proper Nigerian girl, a proper Nigerian lady. There was very early on emotionally, and even intellectually as a little girl, I had some kind of rejection of some of the limitations of that. Also, deep pride in being Nigerian, in being Yoruba and the beauty of it because our culture is so rich and gorgeous and fulfilling and layered and all of these things. Also, the limitations around what is expected, traditionally of African woman, of being kind of not too aggressive and not too overbearing and it’s very reflective of generally globally what is expected of women under patriarchal systems, that assume as women are here as secondary human beings to be helpful, to serve, to nurture. Not to create, not to think, not to innovate, not to employ logic, not to self-govern but to just be of assistance. So, there was early on in me, I think that what I realised once I realised that I was Black in a country that does race in this particular way, there would be assumptions about my intellectual capacity because I was Black and because I was woman or girl and I started to realise that in fourth grade when I was about nine years old.

**Tomiwa:** Yeah, which is so young, and I think you have that as well, especially, being Nigerian, me, myself, I find it. It’s interesting because I totally understand and agree with what you’re saying but my, my mum is one of six, she’s got four sisters, one brother, the women in her family are very present, very, loud and don’t sit back, and kind of go against a little bit, in some ways, the structures that we see exist in the world.

**Funmilola:** That’s wonderful.

**Tomiwa:** I’m so proud of that and I think, especially, because my mum, was a single mother as well, so that’s really nicely impacted my relationship and understanding of my gender and what I can do as a woman.

**Funmilola:** That’s a beautiful thing. In our culture, Nigerian culture, somewhat rare. It’s not to say that there are not bold, clearly articulating their position type women in Nigerian culture, but it is to say that often times those women are perceived of as trouble women, or difficult ladies, or whatever it may be and so, what does it mean for a woman to be vocal and opinionated and clear and logical and present. For there to be this stigma of “you will never find a husband because you are just too much and you are just too much trouble” and so, navigating that and the willingness to allow people to say ‘yeah, you are a difficult person.

**Tomiwa:** Yeah and just being like, ‘okay, so what?’ Okay, fine, I’m difficult, I’m difficult to you but to others maybe I’m not.

**Funmilola:** And if I am difficult to everyone, then everyone should challenge themselves and ask themselves, why is it when clarity of perspective and a willingness to be bold and self-govern and clear, and aggressively articulate who you are, why is it when that is articulated through a female body that it feels more threatening or upsetting than through a male body? People will have all kind of explanations for that. Testosterone, estrogen… You’re not really dealing with science, you’re dealing with your opinion which is formed by what you’ve seen and heard your whole life which is patriarchy.

**Tomiwa:** I often feel like a difficult woman is just, it’s almost like you’re just intimated a little bit by that woman, and you can’t understand that or see that, so you’re just going to call it difficult and put the emphasis on them, rather that you, yourself needing to challenge your perception.

**Funmilola:** Absolutely and needing someone to be a little bit small so that you feel big. That’s not bigness at all, it doesn’t mean that in any real way you are standing tall if you need somebody to be much, much smaller or shorter than you in the dynamic in order for you to feel big. That’s just insecurity wrapped in the idea of tradition.

**Tomiwa:** Like I was saying, I was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Nigerian parents. Edinburgh is incredibly white, the white population is like 98.1 per cent and the Black population is like 0.04 per cent..

**Funmilola:** There’s just three Black people..

**Tomiwa:** Literally, and it’s me, my mum and my brother. I think as well, the age I am and finding my voice within feminism and talking about race and being an activist, and especially, in that very white environment it can be very, really exhausting and this year I took a step back because it’s tiring and it can be traumatic, always feeling like you’re just knocking at a brick wall. Also, I think as well, you have doubt in terms of, is what I’m saying right? Is it true? Especially when you are always talking about your own experiences and I wondered, do you ever have any feelings of doubt? And how do you keep going?

**Funmilola:** Yes, yes, I do, I do have those feelings. But to answer kind of the second question which you asked around talking about things that are very layered and very controversial and is what I’m saying right? I distinguish between what I know to be true based off of empirical evidence and historically sound information, I distinguish that from my opinion, and I think that keeps me in a space of clarity where I am not going to present information that I can’t back. If I have a feeling about something, I will say this is what I *feel* is the case, this is my particular opinion on this event, on this institution on this cultural whatever it may be, versus, this is what I know to be true because historically, this has been the pattern and this is what we can prove. So, this keeps me in terms of knowledge dissemination in a space of clarity so that nobody can say, ‘well no, that’s not true, that’s your opinion.’ I will be clear and distinguish between what I am offering to you when I offer it.

But in terms of doubt, and some kind of feeling of, the idea of that you might just be resisting against this thing that is never going to change. This unshakable structure, resisting or trying to communicate with people that are brick walls, that it feels like they will never change. I think what keeps me in a state of, I don’t even know if hope is the world but kind of, a clear, maybe a perceived of as an optimism. Is that historically, the people that were resisting harmful institutions of the past, whether that be specifically in Nigeria, a colonial regime which unfortunately now is a type of neo-colonialism, but it is still at least, the actual physical colonialism is over in some particular way. At one point, a kind of independent Nigeria seemed a distant, distant dream. When you have people like Kwame Nkrumah, when you have people that are artists like Fela Kuti, when you have freedom fighters like Winnie Mandela that take on the charge to end colonialism, to end Apartheid, it seems very distant until it’s done. It seems like that’s very kind of impossible until it’s done, in the United States it seemed really crazy to assume that at some point segregation would be over and the different “races of people” would be able to co-exist in a way and have access to the same institutions, I have to believe that if I am looking at history knowing that these institutions over time changed because people decided that they need to change, that can still continue to keep happening. Is it easy? Absolutely not. But history has shown that it’s possible. So that keeps me in some way shape or form, again I don’t know if optimistic is the world but it keeps me open to the possibility of transformation even in times, the moments where the effort is fruitless.

I don’t really have those moments very often where I feel like the efforts are fruitless. Sometimes it’s just feels like a difficult day and I know the difference, for example when I’m talking to somebody who I know is open and willing to hear a perspective outside of their own, potentially willing to change if they are presented with information that challenges what they believe, or what they know to be true. There is an open-mindedness, a willingness, versus when I am talking to somebody who, beyond a shadow of a doubt, even when you presented them with information that challenges what they know to be true that they will not change, unshakable. That their only point is to assert that they are right, I will not waste my energy on that. I will look for the openness and the willingness and assert my energy in an arena where it could potentially grow fruits and not waste it on soil that is infertile.

**Tomiwa:** There’s something really nice about how you’re talking about information. Everything feels right now, very opinion led and feeling and emotion. That’s good and that’s important but I think you’re so right, that we need to have that hard, empirical evidence that you almost cannot argue with, this is the fact of the world.

**Funmilola:** Right, I think it can get us to a place of greater kind of, more human consensus around this is what we know and this is what we don’t know. Once we can kind of move from that place and then be clear, because we have politicians in the United States and Brazil and other spaces of the world, you have politicians who are making laws based off of their opinion, based off of what they feel, not what they know to be true, not historically sound information. These can be really damaging laws, when we’re talking about reproductive justice and reproductive access for women, all of these things, you are talking based off of what you *feel.* Feelings are important, emotions are important. They have a significant place in the world and in society, they should not be the leading charge behind what passes legislation and it happens to often.

**Tomiwa:** I completely agree. Talking about feelings and then your show, your performance, how did that come about. What made you decide, okay, I want to create this work? I knew it came from a poem, but what made you take it to that next step?

**Funmilola:** I actually wanted to make it a play from the beginning when I thought through this story that I wanted to tell about specifically these different contingents of political ideology within Black America but that kind of exist throughout the Black diaspora. The only reason that I did the poem was because I wanted to introduce to the public, these characters, and see how Black people specifically would respond to them.

I was scared, I was scared that Black people would be angry at me or upset with me for talking about the things we don’t talk about publicly. These are things that get swept under the rig, put behind doors, closed and tossed away but not really discussed publicly about the different contingents of thought and how they can be problematic and difficult. I wanted to turn the lens inward on us the idea that we are resisting against these systems that are harmful, white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, all of these things. Yes, very true but what chance do we have at actually, genuinely, building coalition and using that power to resist and transform harmful systems if we cannot even sit at a table together long enough, for 15 minutes to see each other.

I am explaining it in a bit of a weird way, but I will say this, I engage four different schools of political thought. The four characters are a reflection of different political ideologies that exist within Black America specifically.

The first character, I’m going in the order of the poem, the first character is what would be considered a Black African cultural nationalist, maybe even identified as a Pan-Africanist, very much saying that Black American people should readopt African culture and African way of being and this will help us to distinguish ourselves from the white Western culture that we have adopted over time as an outgrowth of being enslaved by that land.

But this person with all of their Afrocentric narrative, rhetoric and ideology is also largely patriarchal. This person believes that patriarchy is just the law of the land, that men are the primary human beings, that women are secondary, are helpful, are here to serve males and their duty in life which is too innovate and create. Queer people are simply having a sickness that they have copied Europeans from and is saying all of this queer antagonistic patriarchal types of rhetoric but under the guise of Black power.

Then you have the second character who is obviously a radical Black feminist academic who is advocating for some of the most vulnerable in our community, some of the most forgotten in our communities like Black women and girls and queer people, but is also not realising that as she does that in her scholarship and in her work, that she can also be kind of elitist and not realise it. That she can weaponise her academic language against the very people she’s supposed to be advocating for, that she can talk over people in a way because she has ‘very big’ academic language the assumption is she is right and the person without that training is wrong. It’s also a bit classist because part of what happens is you’re talking down to the person who does not have access to the resources that you’ve had, that did not get to read Michel Foucault and Bell Hooks and all of the Kimberlé Crenshaw and everybody else. So, there’s that and you see that both of those characters are in conflict with one another, both of them thinks absolutely they are right, that they individually as a person are right.

Then the third character I’ll say more briefly, is the activist, that is always on the frontline, at the protest, at the march, at the rally, at the meeting. This is person is there, when something happens, they are at that protest. And while they are doing the necessary work of doing the grassroots organising physically. This activist critiques the person who is maybe doing activist work in their scholarship, maybe is using social media as a tool to spread information about movement work or really just to help people think differently about these deeply engrained systems in society. This activist is going to say, *“you’re not really serious about the movement, you’re not a revolutionary, you’re a sell-out, you’re this, you’re that”* because you’re not at the actual protest with us.

The last character is the politically moderate, neo-liberal person who would be perceived of as having respectability politics. Essentially saying, Black people, stop blaming the system, you keep blaming the system instead of deciding to work hard, deciding to drop the victim mentality and this person is employing this narrative that is, especially in the Black left, a lot of that rhetoric is rejected around Black people are just adopting a victim mentality, but this person, this last character is also saying something around this ‘law of attraction’ if we keep talking about this thing, that is harming us then we are not taking accountability for the reality that if we decide that we can create a different reality, and control out condition in a particular way. Now, this person, whilst they are obviously not understanding the complexities of institutional oppression and how it works, they also are making an interesting point about what happens when you change your mindset.

So what you find is that all four characters are both right and both wrong at the same time. I want us to look at that and look at ourselves so that we can see where we are before we think that we can resist the external thing.

**Tomiwa:** It’s like you just said at the start, you need all four those sitting around the table and talking. We need the different points of view, you need that, kind of diversity in opinion and thought and feeling and fact but you need to be having that conversation, together.

**Funmilola:** Yes, and I think we are in a moment where people are deeply into the silos, so they’ll find their community of people who think like them, act like them, speak like them and they’ll find those people in real life, they’ll find those people on social media and they stick together, and they push anyone out who is not part of that contingent. There’s very little emotional capacity there to engage the person next to you who is saying, *“well I agree with you about certain things, but this is how I feel differently about that.”* I think that it’s an interesting time that we’re in because I don’t know that it serves us. It’s one thing to not, reveal yourself to harm or make yourself vulnerable to harm by being around people that think so drastically different from you to the point where it’s toxic and it’s a harmful environment for you emotionally, and it’s another thing to employ almost an emotional fragility that says you cannot be around anybody that might challenge what you think to be true or what you think to be right because then, that is extremely emotionally triggering. That is when our emotions get in the way of doing the necessary logic work and the necessary coalition building that makes the capacity for resistance possible.

**Tomiwa:** Yeah, that kind of echo chamber which exists on social media, exists on our communities and in Britain we see it a lot. I was chatting to some other girls and they were talking about experiences and I’m in Scotland, and the representation of Black Britishness and it feels very London and if you’re in other parts of the world, sorry, other parts of the country, you’re like *“okay, so we are all Black and we might all be first-gen but actually, we’re very, very different.”*

I think sometimes as well, among this Black British group and Black American’s and it’s something I don’t really engage in so my knowledge here is small, but I wanted to pick your brains a little bit, there almost seems this kind of, hierarchy of oppression or suffering between the two groups, almost this view perhaps that Black brits don’t actually have that hard of a time, and I just wondered what were your thoughts on that? Was that something you had considered or spoken about?

**Funmilola:** I think that the idea of choosing one type of Black experience and then centring that as ‘this is the Black experience’ happens a lot. I think for what you’re saying, specifically in Europe, if you’re talking about the way in which the Black British experience is centred that it’s one of the situations where that happens. I think it is harmful, I think that it keeps us from doing the necessary work around engaging the complexities of the Black experience, that it shows up differently everywhere you go in the world. Just in a similar way that you’re saying the Black London, Londoner experience is centred, the idea is that we have to be more willing to look at the fact that Blackness has different irritations. The Black Brazilian experience is extremely different from the Black American experience which is extremely different from an experience where you are Black person in Nigeria amidst other Black people.

And the only more significant thought I would have around that is that we would need to not over homogenise our experience, it is a heterogenous experience. It is complicated, it is complex, it is layered but finding the link between the link between all of our experiences. None of them have to be particularly centred, that’s the whole point of understanding diaspora. Different experiences of Blackness throughout the world but there is a link. The link is that we find all throughout the world that the darker people of any land or the Blacker people of any land of the Black people of any land are in some way shape or form suffering from an inability to socio-economically be as mobile as their white counterparts and that is because of global anti-Blackness. So, that is the link, that is why there is a call for Pan-Africanism and that’s a whole other conversation, but I would say that.

**Tomiwa:** I found myself describing myself as Black Scottish because I need to be very specific that my experience is different of that of Black Brits or those who would call themselves Black Brits, I would still identify, and we do have this common trail of experience, but I think when describing myself, that’s where I’m at now. I also think that can change, based on what my future holds but, for the minute I would say Black Scottish.

**Funmilola:** Definitely, and even just being somebody who is a Nigerian American, I am very much Nigerian, but I am very much a Black American. I can see that, I can see the way just from me being raised in the states the Black London experience is centred in that whole conversation, in media about Black Europe, I can see how that shows up, it’s disproportionally centred to the extent that me being raised in America, we often times will kind of do this broad brush of this is what the Black London people are saying and their might be an assumption that there is a similar experience elsewhere.

I’ve dispelled that myth about the homogeneity of that by talking to Black people from different parts of Europe.

**Tomiwa:** Which is really nice and really refreshing. There’s something about being here in Rio as well, having this international presence of Black people and Black Brazilians that you’re like, it’s gotten a bit wider and this is what I was missing. These are the conversations that I needed to hear and wanted to hear about Blackness.

**Funmilola:** Have you been to the States?

**Tomiwa:** Yes, I was there this summer, I was in Boston, Chicago and New York. My best friend lives there, who’s white and we went to uni together.

**Funmilola:** Nice, nice, nice. I’m curious about what that looks like? So going from Scotland to the States, looking at the racial dynamics in Scotland and then looking at the racial dynamics in the States?

**Tomiwa:** I think, that was the interesting thing and I’d been before when I was 18/19 and just hadn’t, I don’t know, it wasn’t on my radar. This time, I was saying to my friend, I had this idea, just because you know there’s way more Black people in America, that you would just see more people in positions of power perhaps. It was really, really, really sad because especially in Chicago, even just in the hotel and the places we went to, it feels like, and it’s so simple right, but all the people who were in lower paid fields, lower paid work, where all Black. A lot of the restaurants we went to, I was the only Black person sitting in that restaurant. This seems mad to me, because this is not the America, I thought it was.

**Funmilola:** And this is what you were experiencing in Chicago?

**Tomiwa:** Yeah.

**Funmilola:** I was just having a conversation this morning with I think it’s called, O Globo, a media outlet here in Brazil. They asked me something about the racial dynamics in Brazil and what not, I told them, what you find quite consistently in Europe and here in Brazil, and in the United States and a lot of other places, is that you go and look at the working class looks like. It is not to belittle physical labour but what would we identify as menial labour is jobs that are occupied by the Blackest people. Of course, in the United States that becomes complicated by the presence of what would be identified as Mexican people, or as the Latino, Latina, Latina x population and the jobs that are done there in the United States in terms of physical labour. More broadly what you find globally is that these are the types of jobs that Black people do, and people tell me all the time, I hear conversations about how there’s no real racism in France because it’s not overt, it’s not as egregious as a consistent situation where unarmed, innocent Black people are shot down in the street. It’s so convenient to say that because that’s not happening and it’s not on the news weekly that we’re just so aggressive over here, and not taking a look at always and forever who is pouring your coffee, not even noticing who it is and what they look like and why it is that your Black counterpart is struggling with this social economic mobility. It must be because they’re not working as hard, or is it because the history of anti-Blackness, is it because Black people can give a resume that looks the same as their white counterpart and might not get called back for the interview. That Black people are hyper sentenced and get higher sentences than their white counterparts for doing the same crime with the same criminal history. We find this dynamic happening not just in the United States but elsewhere throughout the world.

**Tomiwa:** It’s sad, I know, it’s so many things, it’s sad and it’s overwhelming, it’s *urghhhh,* It’s frustrating and I can’t quite articulate it, yeah, I don’t know, which is why the work you’re doing and everyone else is doing, is so important and so vital. I suppose that is how you find the kind of hope or optimism.

**Funmilola:** It’s just like a feeling that you have to. I’m hearing you, it’s like what’s the other option? Is it to just leave the world as it exists? Is it to leave it this way? It just would be an absurdity to think that we would ever just be okay with how it is. It doesn’t mean that we have to be un-joyful people, that we have to be stripped of our joy. I write about that a little bit, around the idea of like, I am a very happy person. I am very clear about the fact that, because there are really difficult, violent, challenging things that happen throughout the world, it is not my charge to be downtrodden, it is not my charge nor my responsibility to be perpetually sad, is it something that can very much happen amidst the circumstances of the world? Yes, absolutely, but I have taken on the task of really guarding myself and my emotion so that I can essentially continue to exist in a healthy way and attempt to be of service for as long as I can which means I know that my existence is not based on resisting the powers that be or the most horrible issues in the world. But that I can choose intentionally to be helpful and that I can also choose to sustain myself and to know when and how to consume media, when and how to consume news that I know is emotionally difficult.

Also, give myself permission to know what’s happening in the world, to know what took place that might have been extremely violent and devastating and to give myself permission to not consume it like food. It literally enters our pores; it is trauma that we hold in our bodies. So, there are times where I will see a police shooting, or I will see some egregious, absurd law that is violently patriarchal, I have to decide to allow myself the space and the permission to not feel like I have to now, be extremely upset in order for me to validate that I see it, I understand it and that I’m a good person because now I’m upset about this bad thing.

It doesn’t have to be that, that, that the emotional damage does not have to be a sign of integrity or honour, because good people are supposed to be upset when bad things happen. That’s the natural order, good people are supposed to be upset when bad things happen. So we do that, because a lot of us are good, or we can rearrange, that when bad things happen we can use our energy differently. So to say, I only have this much energy to offer, I can use it being upset or I can attempt to use it in conceptualising a possibility of transforming or sustaining. Does that make sense?

**Tomiwa:** No, it does make sense. That’s really nice about energy and how you use that, and when to use that in different ways.

I was chatting to my friend Courtney and you’ve just answered my question and really enlightened me in a sense about how, how to think about my own activism in my own life. The way I’ve done it, is kind of reject it all, and then feel quite guilty because you have that but I’m a good person so I should care and I should bring voice to it and I should tweet about it or say something or write something or do something but that’s really exhausting so I don’t want to do that, so I feel bad about that and it’s just this tireless circle.

**Funmilola:** It’s okay to say, ‘no not today’, I’ll check that tomorrow, it’s also okay, I think people don’t say that a lot, you have to sustain yourself. I don’t want to ever present a narrative that we can just overall absolutely control our emotions because I don’t know that that’s actually true for human beings, we are emotional creatures. When you come across something that is really difficult and devastating it can be emotionally challenging. I’m advocating for minding your mind but also not avoiding the realities of what’s going on, that balance of knowing when to engage and when not to engage. You can take on the charge to be helpful in this life without letting that be the conclusion that you will forever be upset and angry, that’s not the conclusion. I want to continue to be helpful but I don’t need to take on the task that’s saying that means I forever have to be angry.

**Tomiwa:** When you talk about minding your mind and conserving your energy, you touched a little bit about not consuming certain things, and today I’m not going to consume but are there other things you do in terms of self-care and looking after yourself, what are the nice things that you do for yourself?

**Funmilola:** Specifically, as pertains to media and then I will talk more about my personal life around self-care. When it comes to social media, you can log onto social media and see something that is incredibly devastating and is the first thing that pops onto your feed. Social media is so present in our lives and how we consume news, I’d started to do this years ago, silently before I log on, I won’t say anything verbally but I started to do this thing where there’s just a moment where I remind myself and give myself permission to see whatever it is that I’m going to see and not take it personally. It’s just a small affirmation for myself, to remind myself *‘you’re here, that’s there and you don’t have to consume it, you can see it, but just that little bit of distance emotionally.”* Because I know we also live in an age that is hyper-informative, we have so much information that we didn’t used to have access to, which can also be overloading on the brain. Navigating the circumstances of this time and this generation, that bit of distance I leave there so I can guard myself against whatever it is that I’m about to see.

Other things that I do for myself, I’m very careful about who I spend time with and my community. I’m around people that feel energetically compatible with me, I think sometimes our communities and our friends, our loved ones, sometimes can be an outgrowth of whatever we’re offered, sometimes even just a bit of desperation, humans need connection and I think cultivating intentional community is a brilliant thing, because you’re then around people that are energetically compatible with you. What a beautiful thing to not need to work to just be in the presence of somebody, because capitalism demands that we work all the time anyway, labour, labour, labour, labour, labour. Love shouldn’t be labour, I think we’ve been trained to think that it should, that it should be laborious work. It’s not, that’s a lie, I firmly believe that is a lie. I think it can sometimes be a challenge, it can be a bit of compromise, communication, these things we haven’t been trained to do but not these laborious tasks, so I’m careful about my community.

I eat very intentionally and so the food that I consume, is for the most part, I choose based of what my body has told me it wants. If I’m treating myself or I’m eating something out with what my body actually wants, I’m also doing that very intentionally. So essentially, to make it very plain, I try to engage in all aspects of my life, mindful consumption, mindful consumption of food, mindful consumption of people, mindful consumption of television, mindful consumption of books, mindful consumption of everything. Even if I say something weird on the billboard, where I’m just kind of like what kind of strange messaging is here? I won’t look at it because I want to be careful of what I’m consuming and once that enters my subconscious then it’s not in my control. I’m careful and I try to take care of my body.

**Tomiwa:** Hearing you speak, this whole time you just, it’s really nice to talk to someone, it feels like you’re living with that boldness that you described and very intentionally and with a lot of control over yourself and what you do. That’s really nice to talk to. When I think a lot about how I, and I don’t like to get too caught up on it, but how I want to exist in the human in the future, a lot of what you’ve said, I’m like, yes, I really like that, I really like that. So yes, thank you.

**Funmilola:** I really appreciate you for saying that. I think we are just cultivating ourselves daily. There are so many things that I still want to embody in my life, and I don’t want to rush myself, and so I appreciate the work that you do, you’re so lovely.

**Tomiwa:** Thank you! I just wondered if there’s something that you could put your finger on, has there been a moment, a book, a woman, an experience that has shaped or defined you at this moment.

**Funmilola:** Mm, there’s so many women. I will say one woman specifically and I will say one book. So, Maya Angelou and it still makes me want to cry, it makes me think about when she passed away and my reaction to that. That same day I wrote a tribute to her and performed it. I felt really connected to Maya Angelou because she seemed like someone who really decided who they were going to be and I feel like I had to decide who I was going to be. You can see it makes me emotional, I almost can’t even put my finger on what my emotional connection to Maya Angelou is. She went through something, and to be very transparent, I haven’t even been through extremely traumatic experiences in my life, but I have had instances where people underestimated me. I think she early on, had instances where people underestimated her and she used it and was like ‘I will show you what I am capable of.’ I did the same thing before I knew who she was and when I read about her and started to listen to her speak, I was like ‘we are the same person.’

The Four Agreements changed my life, I realised why human beings struggle with themselves so much, why there’s so much insecurity and projection. It made me understand even why there’s so much devastation politically, the fact that human beings can throw away food and lock it up because of capitalism and watch someone not eat for profit, the book made me realise why human beings behave this way. It gave me an understanding that I could choose to be a different type of human, and if I could choose to be a different type of human then maybe I can help people to see why we behave this way. SO those are two things.

**Tomiwa:** Thank you so much, I’m so sorry for making you cry.

**Funmilola:** I’ve never, when I usually talk about Maya Angelou it doesn’t make me cry but I think it just reminded me how did I become this way and I don’t think about it that much.

**Tomiwa:** But it’s important, thank you, thank you much.

***MUSIC***