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Tell me, um, what was one thing that was beautiful that you saw on your walk here? Well, the rain was beautiful while I was inside the car, less so when I was walking in the rain. Happy Friday everyone. Happy Friday. Yeah Friday, Friday, so it is a it is a beautiful rainy May Friday. It's also my birthday weekend. It is on May 23rd. Today is May 20th, so I'm super excited. This is always a weekend that brings me lots of joy. So I'm excited to be here this evening. Um, we're sitting at the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. We're sitting in my office. OK, yay office. Happy birthday. Thank you so much. And I am sitting with someone who I'm super, super excited to, uh, interview and to bring on the Black Matter podcast. Welcome to my regular listeners and also co-produced with the Center for Media at Risk podcast, Miss Andrea Walls. Yay. Yes. So, Andrea, we have lots of things. To talk about, but I want to just introduce myself first and then hear about you. Yes, professional bio, but also just like personal stuff too. So I'm Chaz Barracks. I'm a postdoc here, postdoc faculty at the University of Pennsylvania. This is the Center for Media at Risk. And what I'm doing with the Center podcast in my podcast, which is called Black Matter. I fostering conversations about black joy as critical practice, because as a scholar and as a media artist, I'm very passionate about making sure that we center black joy, black pleasure, black deviance in the ways that we learn about everyday black life. And I'm also very passionate about positioning everyday black life as a form of fine art. We've got. The Center for Media at Risk, their goal, um, well, our goal, because I'm a part of the center for a year as a postdoc, is to foster free and critical media practice and scholarship. Um, I'm gonna read you their kind of, um, bio or mission statement, and then we're gonna kind of complicate it a little bit because I'll tell you how I think that black joy, um, plays into the conversations around protecting the media and freeing the media and making sure that folks have access to media scholarship. So we're gonna start out with a little academic stuff and then we're gonna go black academic. So the Center for Media at Risk, this notion of uh protect and save the media, um, is something that I want to complicate with you, Andrea, given your, your work and your extensive bio, which by the way, I loved, um, using your bio as a metaphor. As a map metaphor to kind of encourage folks to get involved with the organizations that you have worked with, we're gonna talk about that too, but the reason why I want to complicate this notion of protect and save the media with you given your work because of how your work is deeply rooted in centering and potentially uh protecting black voice and the ownership of our stories, um, and the images that represent us. I would like to go as far to say that you are empowering through the black gaze, G A Z E, and using the spaces that we know as the museum, the archive, the institution at large to kind of turn the camera towards Black joy, right? So in the editing, we're going to give a little ambient sound there, right? Turning the camera towards Black joy. Which is something that I'm very interested in and very passionate about, um, and very aware of how institutions like the University of Pennsylvania, including the Center for Media at Risk, need to be held accountable and need to be reminded and encouraged to center joy, pleasure in the. ways that we learn about black life to kind of circumvent how sometimes in the academy or what we know as higher ed, this is the way that we learn about black people in higher ed is often around trauma, oppression, right? And, and, and thinking about our, our reactions and our struggles of with racism, right? And while all of that is, is there, right? We'll leave that there for a minute. I think that there's something just as powerful and important to learn about black life through the ways that we experience joy. Um, and it's not about erasing black joy, but it's about saying that there, there is rich knowledge production in how black people experience joy, not in spite of our struggles, but sometimes because of. So that's, that's kind of like where I'm going with this conversation tonight. Also, How is this notion of protection for you uh related to saving the media in a world where we know that the media has not always been kind or considerate of authentic black representations or seeing and listening to us outside of our oppressions and our struggles. So that was like the little like spiel of why I'm very interested in talking to you and making sure that your voice is a part of this conversation around black joy as critical practice as we sit in the Center for Media at Risk, because I think that you're doing important work and kind of allowing us to think about black people and black life beyond trauma, oppression, and struggle. Yes. I know that was a lot. Yes, uh, but welcome to the podcast. That was just some framing of where we're going. But all that to say, now we can do academic stuff. I'm very happy you're here. I'm very inspired by your work and I really want to make sure that you get some nourishment, some payment, and have a meal with me right now and have a glass of wine to just kind of kiki about Black joy and why it's important that we are doing the work or you are doing the work and making sure the world and these institutions are learning about Black joy. You know, I'm pouring you wine out to that long spiel. And I appreciate you. For doing so. You know, it's complicated and I like you the way you say that you want to complicate the the very things that you're actually here to engage with academically. Because in my heart of hearts, I feel like. We don't need the academy to be meaningful because we are meaningful to be scholars to to be scholars. Um, some of the most brilliant people I know didn't get past 7th grade because there are certain places where our brilliance can't be seen, it can't be comprehended because People let themselves be confused by our effervescence, by our wonder, by our bodily awareness, and the freedom that we've always had regardless of what anyone has created systemically, like the freedom of the body, the freedom to work uncompensated for hours in horrifying conditions. And yet put it all down and dance through the entire night in something called a hush harbor to do a ring shout to uh put the body to the further work of joy. Under cover of darkness. It's incomparable the capacity, and I, I don't separate the suffering from the joy because I distinguish joy from happiness. Joy and grief can be simultaneous. They can exist together. I feel like happiness is this thing that was created to keep us, you know, um, dissatisfied. It's something we have to continue to pursue, right? To pursue a thing as an aggressive stance. So this idea of pursuing happiness that we get sold as uh American children, um, is what really endangers us. When we are outside of all these systems that are trying to judge us and make us feel small. We have all the freedom, the joy, the complicated awareness of our humanity, you know, where we can be. Belligerent and sad, and, and right, and then all of that on the dance floor or on the stoop or in just playing cards, the linguistic dexterity when you play pinole in my day fades for some of the younger folks. You know, when you follow that linguistic, the composition, the, the poetry, the disdain, the, you know, bussing on folks, capping, whatever the kids call it now, you know what I'm saying, there is a uh facility with a language that was invented to shame us. Perhaps it wasn't invented to shame us, but it has been used to make us feel non-standard. What does that even mean? You know, um, less than diminished in the sight of the King's English, whatever that, you know. And before we go on, I want to say cheers to you after we gave, we gave the girls that little intro lecture. And I have some follow-up questions. I don't even know if I was answering a question. No, I think you were, and I mean just to add a quick pin on that, I think the Center for Media at Risk is very invested in kind of thinking about how we protect the media, how we save the media, and how we empower people to, you know, have their voice heard, and I think. Something we have to be considerate of is the ways in which black folks have always been under attack before the pandemic, right? And our joy has always been something that has not mattered, right? That has not been invested in. And The media has sometimes been used as an apparatus by white supremacy to quiet black voices, to silence black voices, um, to not hear from us in the way that we speak, to not see us in the way that the hair grows out of our head, right? And so I'm very passionate about using the media as you would call it, or using the microphone that we're like that we're doing right now, using the camera, right, to basically. Create work that comes from our body, create work that that I know, you know, my auntie's kitchen table is like the first place where I learned about black feminism. So I want to use the camera, not to say everyone just needs to get a PhD and come to University of Pennsylvania or get to college, and that's gonna be how we, you know, escape. Oppression or escape racism, etc. it's like, no, I think a few of us have to get access to these spaces to then take the camera, steal it, borrow it, whatever, and bring it to the spaces of scholarship that we know nurture us. My mother definitely who never believed that these spaces would truly see me as beautiful as I truly am, right? She always taught me to kind of come into these spaces, take what you need and go elsewhere because. The media as we know it, the institution as we know it, the university as we know it is not designed to see us as amazing or in our boundlessness as we truly are. And so I think it's very important to center scholars like yourself that are already ahead of the game, already know that black joy is scholarship and that we need to be learning from the ways that black people experience joy outside of the confines of the institution. You know, so much of what inspired me to begin this body of work. Was about the ways in which and you you talked about it at the top of the uh podcast. Media focuses on the trauma makes, I have a degree in urban studies of Rutgers. If you said Penn or Drexel, it all changes how urban studies, you know, but it was in Camden, New Jersey, which at the time, uh, that I was in school was considered the most dangerous city in America. And I feel like I got a degree in the history of things that didn't work and it occurred to me where's the focus on the things that are working because there are things on grassroots level that are working, um, but aren't recognized or aren't in the academy as part of, you know, and, and everyone in the course with the exception of myself had not grown up in an urban area. And so much of what I said in defense of the urban area was not believed by the people who would eventually get a degree and would be making decisions based on black communities and other communities of color as a problem that needed to be solve. As opposed to these very rich, vibrant, colorful, exciting um communities which may look a little rough, but there is an energy, there is something that is thriving in the midst of real trauma in the midst of, and I mean, you know, white folks act like they don't come from traumatized and traumatizing backgrounds. You pull these veils back and it's just that they're not smashed up against each other, so they don't see each other's trauma. Or they have more resources to escape it. Or, or, or cordon it off. Like when you're in the city, you're right up against it, you're right next door to it. It's like, you know, we can hear what's going on next door, you know. And some of the beauty that you're talking about, about what we know as the hood, right? Um. It's beautiful because it hasn't been co-opted, it hasn't been touched, it hasn't been gentrified, right? So sorry, I didn't give you the whole background, but this episode is going to be a part of a four-part series on my podcast, Black Matter, which is a social platform and critical key key space for black queer folks and black folks in general to just like have critical conversations about joy and pleasure and who we are. are outside of the ways that the institutions that we may work for or be affiliated with seeks to define us, right? So just to bring people like yourself on who are doing dope work that the institution, as you said earlier, Drexel, etc. is recognizing, but also just to see like what's Andrea's favorite ice cream flavor? You know, that's what we talk about on my podcast. What is your favorite ice cream flavor, by the way? See, that's the critical scholar question right there. I'm a non-sweet. I'll, I'll, I'll answer what you think I'm a non-sweets girl, so I love a good like oatmeal, ice cream or spistachio, anything that's not like a, a non-sweet flavor. Well, I'm gonna have a caveat because this will be my favorite right now today, though, if I'm asked, you know, years from now, it might be something else, but I'm gonna go with coffee because it's gotta be, you know, coffee in the morning, coffee in the evening. If I'm gonna get some ice cream, it's gonna be coffee, coffee, ice cream. So this episode is a part of a four part series on Black joy. As as critical practice and talking to folks about Black joy and how you, you know, use it in your own daily practice and One of the other guests that we had is Shelly. Shout out to Shelly, who runs, um, who owns one of the co-owners of Golden Dragon Restaurant, which is the black and, uh, Chinese and Thai owned space in West Philly, and they were saying very similar things to you around like the magic is. When we learn from and center black folks who are living every day and that's the magic living every day as in prioritizing our rest, prioritizing our, our ability to just do nothing, right? Thinking about a life beyond labor, what are our dreams beyond being recognized by the white institution, black folks who are investing in their mental health, black folks who are investing in the joy of others, like growing shit, you know. And then Jolie, who was on our podcast, Jolie is a theater artist, shout out to Jolie Garrett. Joy did the, did the first episode of this series, and he said something very similar to you as well, where Jolie basically was talking about black people are the best at creating joy because we have had to create joy under such, you know, extreme circumstances. So because we have dealt with so much ish from these institutions, right? And the state in general. That's why white folks want to go to our parties. That's why they want to go to level up, because we know how to orchestrate and create alternative worlds that are all about our pleasure and our joy and, and getting our joy by any means necessary. And there's this thing. So you're already speaking. You're speaking to the other folks already. It's like y'all are already in. Conversation. For sure, because it's something that we've always known, even if we haven't articulated as such because we live in spaces with ourselves and we see the capacity for recovery in the moment and and the thing. That has always been misinterpreted. I am eating an apple, but so is Andrea. She's just not eating her apple. But I said, you're allowed to do what you want to do on this podcast, and there are great apples in this room. There are, but now there's a cup of wine and so. I'm gonna prioritize, but there's been this misunderstanding when that outside, that external gaze has seen our capacity. And they, instead of saying what an extreme capacity for joy and resurrection and re-emergence, they look and say, those happy darkies, they're not, you know, they're not even bright enough to know. That they're being oppressed. Look at them dancing, like, and they, they use that to minimize an intelligence without understanding that the thing that they've been trying to capture through every decade through, you know, every uh systemic structure and uh from every backlash, they can't. They can't even understand it. They misinterpret it willfully and um without even understanding the insufficiency of their own understanding and they misinterpret that as as a dereliction of our humanity and yet they tried to abscond with all of it. And sell it back to us, you know, they try to co-opt everything, not understanding that in the you take the cream off the top and you know what comes up from the bottom, you know. Um, something just as rich, more delicious, um, it's incomprehensible to these systems that are predicated on the destruction of the humanity, and it's, and that's how I define joy, that indestructible. Element of constant graceful recovery from anything. The way that Andrea Walls defines black joy. You might have to play it back because I, I don't even, you know, it, it, it was just an authentic um eruption of how I experienced this capacity. To me it's, it's always an emerging story. It's an emergent. It's the most creative force because they continue to try to close down all the avenues. That we invent, burrow through they try to buy it, sell it, um, beat it out of you, incarcerate you from it. And it is still here. Even as we sit in the University of Pennsylvania. And I think about how important it is to, um, my roots, my family that I as a black queer first generation college student sitting in this space, I still think about the violence, the trauma, um, the erasure, the repression that black folks have dealt with in order to get into this space of access and Yet still we have this conversation where we're eating apples and drinking wine and just talking about and complicating black joy and making sure that, uh, voices that have often been unheard are heard and have access to offering our own stories and centering our own gaze. With that, I think it's no better time to ask you. What is the Black Joy Museum and how has Because again we're centering the personal and also the the political because as black people we we can't separate that I believe. I think our personal, our love for each other, um, is not to be separated from our professional work and I, and I think you're a beautiful example of that and so I, I wanna go back and forth. I'm doing that intentionally around. Um, I want to ask you what is the Black Joy Museum, but then how does the Black Joy Museum give Andrea black joy or how has Andrea's self-authored emergent definition of black joy, um, Has, how has that fueled the Black Joy Museum, which I, which is what I got to know you through. So, I've always been awed by these spontaneous ways of claiming space. They're spontaneous, they show up overnight. When I lived in Camden in particular, people used to create what I consider these Movable museums using soap on the back window and sometimes it was like rest in peace homie, sometimes it was, you know, somebody graduated, same thing, the way you drive by a street in the morning and then you come back and there is an altar to someone who has died violently. But these altars are created with such care and they're spontaneous and they're made up of dollar store candles and teddy bears and and you know, if you catch it right. The candles are still burning. There's still little Hennessy in the bottle, and these ways that people just and you hear about uh making traditions of jumping the broom to signify a marriage. Something that is really you're not entitled to. Uh, and your chosen can be taken away and sold away, um, during periods of enslavement. And yet these rituals continue to to consecrate these moments, and there is a joy. In this spontaneous coming together to celebrate a life, even one that has been taken uh violently in ways that when you hear about suburban schools they have uh a counselor that comes in around the clock care for the young people who may have been traumatized by some violence in the city, those things don't happen. People create their own spaces and You know, this is a beginning of me thinking of museums as not stuff you pay admission to but as things you create yourself. I also did a residency with a South African visual activists, uh, Sir Maholi, uh, Zanele Maholi. And their theme for us was, you know, what is it a museum, who is it for? And we were called the Women's Mobile Museum. So this idea of having something spontaneous, mobile, you can show. Up with it, you can bring it with you it's free and it's free. And so at a time where I felt that all of the media narratives were controverting what I know about my community because I lived there and I'm like. I don't feel traumatized 24/7 unless I have on the news when I'm just like the news is noted by us. And I'm like mostly I'm hanging out on the stoop, talking to the neighbor, watching the kids play, make up games, you know, we say grace before we have a meal. We're thankful even if the meal is toast. You know, because sometimes it's like that, you know, if it's no like whatever, however humble, we're grateful. And I just was like, I need equal time for this parallel story, cause I'm so grateful for the people out here moving for justice, being in the street protesting. But I felt like for the people who make decisions and they have no intimacy with us, yet they are in the position to make decisions about our lives, where we live. I'm like, I just want y'all to know that there is a steady stream of joy in our existence. That flows boundlessly. And here's some evidence of it so that you can at least have some of these images in your head. When you're deciding. Who we are. I hear your work With the Black Joy Museum in one space being about the creation of museums um as a free space for black people to represent our lives on our own terms and share that among the world to kind of uh counter some of the narratives that harm us or that claim to know us but don't, right? And I hear it Being about archiving and the importance of the body as an archive and the importance of, you know, demystifying the archive, um, so that we see our own. Experiences our own embodied knowledges, as my close friend, uh, Dr. Julian Glover would say, we see our own embodied knowledges as like a form of knowledge production, as a form of resistance and remembering our life beyond the interruptions. I'm writing a lot about the, the interruptions to black life and my own relationships to interruptions to black life that have been orchestrated by the state is poverty or Gentrification, right? The, the things that interrupt black joy and how so much of our stories when they're not told by us are are reduced to like how we respond or make it, uh, in spite of those interruptions, and I hear what you're saying it's like, yes, there are interruptions, but while those things were going on poverty, gentrification, police violence, this kind of institutional. Repression of education, real like black ass education, right? Like asking students to from the hood to come here and in order to be an Ivy League student, they need to kind of, they need to learn code switching, right? I hear you saying that like while all that is happening, your work around archiving and centering black joy and demystifying and opening up the museum space is also about showing the steady. The steadiness, the steady joy of black life, the thing that you can't see unless you're there, unless you're present. And when I think about some of the traumas that I have been through, um, when my, my, my mom who I lost last year was incarcerated for a lot of my childhood, and I, as a scholar now, I think about how so much of my conditioning of remembering that experience was all about like, you're at risk, you're low income. You come from a troubled dysfunctional background, right? But while all that was going on. I remember, and I think it's a, it's a form of resistance to remember that there was joy there. There was joy there, um, and maybe she didn't, or maybe I didn't come from a home where people were reading to me at night and tucking me in, but there was joy there. There was joy when she was released. There was joy when we were in the in the line at TJ Maxx and I knew that she was writing a bad check. And it worked. There was joy there, right? And when we think about the Center for Media at Risk and we think about protecting the media and centering voices that have been heard again, I think it's so important to put that message into the world to use the microphone to spit that message that black people. It's, it's a form of resistance to recognize that like there was joy there. This idea of joy as resistance, which absolutely it is. I feel it's so important to to understand that. All resistance is in a fight. Here you. You know, um. You need to teach a class. I think you are a teacher, you're a teacher, you know, it's like when we're protesting systems, the language I'm trying to come to because it it gets exhausting to feel in our position as black people and people of color. That we gotta be out here fighting 24/7, it's exhausting. And so my new framework is, how do I speak joy to power. You know, fuck the truth because who's truth, you know, there are so many generations of lies that have to be unraveled um to get into a conversation about truth, but the joy in the body, the joy of me saying no, I'm not gonna participate in that with you today. I'm not gonna fight you on it. That feels more. Uh An avenue of things that are possible because I think what these systems have been very adept at doing is um. Changing up. All right, well, y'all got used to this fight, so we're gonna give you something else you gotta fight, um, you know, and so now the things that worked in the 60s with Martin Luther King, now it's like, how much are you protesting because you went and got a permit, they know exactly where you are, you know, we're dressed in like $800 worth of branded gear with our phones and they already You know, absconded with all of our resources, and we're in this false position in many cases of performing protests. Because it's no longer a protest, because it's been so systemized. And it's being surveilled. It's and it's being surveilled and we're surveilling ourselves. So how do we take the fight out of the rebellion? Because the fight is what cost us our, our, our bodies, our minds, our energy, our capacity to just give care and just love in our own environments. And then it keeps us triggered in our own familial trauma because we're exhausted from trying to do this big fight that we come home and we can't be uh careful and kind with the ones closest to us. So how do we, how do we change that dial? You're not gonna make me fight you. Cause I'm over here like protected. I'm centered in in my own joy, in my own capacity to be renewed. Based on my like solar energy, like, you know what I mean? Let me get this energy from the sun. One of the ways that I feel we combat the the urge to just be to have our being be tied to the struggle or to fighting is to literally have these kinds of conversations but from the different areas of the world that we kind of represent or the different strategies of surviving and thriving, um, and being determined to thrive and not just be reduced to survival. That's right. I think that I. I come from a background where I was conditioned that by getting into institutions like this, getting the college degree, having a certain amount of money in your bank account, owning a home, um, would kind of protect you. From some of these systemic, you know. Injustices that are often just at the in our destiny no matter what and then getting all of those things, right? Acquiring the degrees, traveling the world, etc. and realizing that. You're still a \*\*\*, still gonna be, they're still gonna, um, evaluate you differently. They're gonna look at your hair differently. They're going to not invite you to some of the elbow ruing parties that they have, like all of that. If you don't have folks to unpack that conversation with, and to think about the fight through various mediums, strategies. And modes It's very lonely and it's a huge reality check to realize like I did all of the things that they said I would do and yet still I'm experiencing. That right? So I'm, I'm interested in. Given the work that you do, where are those spaces that you go to to have these types of conversations or who are those people or where do you, where does your nourishment to go back out and not just fight? Well, I'm a Philly girl. What's a Philly girl mean? Can be hard on a being. Philly is rough and I'm tough, but not rough. I, I never got the rough edge, but I have a toughness that comes from being born and bred here, and from being a poet, and from being an empathetic person and From knowing that I can take the hits and emerge. And for those of us who um are born and bred here, I, I met a guy from New York, uh, just randomly in DC at a conference that I was at, and, um, we were just sitting at the bar, just having a conversation. We had a lovely conversation and when he found out I was from Philly, he looked at me he was like, I'm scared of the 5 year olds in Philly, like, you know what I mean? I I have been victim of saying things like that as someone that just moved to Philly in August. I was talking about this on a symposium or an event. We did a dope ass event around con artistry as Black joy at the Penn Museum because the Penn Museum is a contentious space and very problematic and um. While not being from Philly, I felt the energy of that space and wanted to just bring black people into it to say like, what the fuck? and unpack that and and still have joy. We had food in a room that food wasn't allowed like just do whatever we wanted, you know. But I, I'm saying I've been victim of saying that Philly is a rough city because I have moved here from Richmond, Virginia, which is also very similar historically black city, right? Critical ties to slavery, right? Port city, port cities very racist, very racist. Yet still, there is a type of, there's a type of like anger and tension and like, uh, harshness that I feel in Philly. And I feel from black people when you talk about this institution, right? And so, as someone that just moved here in August, I I want to know more about that, but I also, as you said, I'm, I'm curious of like how that is impacting me. I mean this could be its own thing. We're going on. But you know, the thing about Philly is all those things are true, but when you meet Someone who you can vibe with in the city. It's real, it's authentic, it's deep. So there's a lot of that pressure that people are under when you're from here because especially for black people who are raised in a city that is, you know, branded as the city of brotherly love, the cradle of democracy and liberty, and there's this whole narrative that sells the entire American experience about, you know, independence, freedom. But it doesn't actually apply to you, so you're raised hearing this one narrative, but it's not your embodied experience. And I mean, I grew up at 62nd and Spruce, two blocks from the, uh, so-called move bombing where they bombed uh people at 6221 Osage Avenue. So how do you hold those two things? Freedom, democracy, independence, you know, all of these cherished American ideals, and your city government will bomb you and let you burn. You know, how do you hold those things, like in a city that doesn't want to talk about it. Acknowledge it and Penn is complicit in, you know, uh, recent stories. So the artists that uh uh have come up in this pressure. And have this hard one, I'm, I'm really kind of tired of this word authenticity, uh, but it's the word that comes to mind now, um. Philly is a pretty real place. So you kinda know where you stand with people. When you make these connections, you feel solid. They're very rude. It's very rude. You make a friendly they're like they see me right, and then even if you don't see people for decades, the connection is there and it's strong and it roots you. And it allows you to be present with the seriousness of life and then you, you, you laugh. At things that may or may not be funny. Um, but it's like it's deep, it's the, the laughter infuses the bones and the breath and the body and the being. Like you quake with it. That's quick. I hear you on kind of the word authenticity being overused. Emergence keeps coming up or emerge to emerge. Um, self emergence keeps coming up as I'm hearing you and. I'm wondering, one is that the title for this episode, you know, Emergence with Black Joy or emerge with Black joy, but How does that work, like when I say emergence versus authenticity, how are you in internalizing that? That's the vibe I'm getting. Yeah, no, because emergence is like it can, you know, it's ongoing, it's electric, you know, I can emerge from my sorrow right now, you know, uh, and then. Later in the day I might dip the energy dips or the sorrow comes in a storm, um, but the availability of the emergence is always there. And, and the fine tuning towards joy is a decision that we can always make. For me, the, the decision making is what's new because there's always been the vibrance and the way that you had planned to be in a bad mood and you wanted to hold a grudge, but then the music hits and you're like. And then that energy takes over and you're in the space. Of of joy, against your will sometimes because it's a community but it's, you know, if you're, if you have proximity to the energy that exists in black culture. Unlimited proximity too, you know, I need proximity to black joy. I was talking about this with my brother, we used to um In the summertime. You just followed the base. You would come out on a summer night and you followed the base. There would be a block party somewhere. Basement party, you just follow the bass music on the humidity of the night. Just give me Caribbean barbecue vibes. I'm Jamaican, so I'm thinking all about like it's the base. It's the base on this podcast because now we're, we're in the blackcademic side, but I, I went to a, a talk that was by a scholar who we're going named at Temple and um they were, they were, they were talking about Jamaican music, Caribbean music, and they were not Jamaican or black, um, and they played, they played, they played a reggae song. And they, it was during the lecture and they didn't move and as a Jamaican, I was like instantly, no. You can't like as someone, as a, as a child that has been raised by Jamaican folks like movement and like feeling the reggae sounds in your body. It's like if you're cooking breakfast, you can be cooking breakfast, but if you're cooking breakfast with like Buju Bantan on, like it changes the whole vibe, yeah. And so when I see someone like kind of, you know, institute like not making it, not leaning into that, it's like, nope, you can't study the culture. You can't have it, you know. And let alone teach it. You can't teach it. No, you can't teach it. It's so funny. I was watching some program recently and it struck me. I'm like, you know, whenever they're trying to make one of these characters seem You know, deep or interesting. They're always some kind of jazz aficionado, right, and they're trying to tell people about Coltrane or, you know, to make them to to give them a credibility that they otherwise hadn't earned. I don't know, just, um, ways in which black culture is so adored. While the people are so maligned, does that, how does that even work? That's a question for our listeners. How does that work? How can you? I mean, in the Afrofuturist manifesto. It's a dope film that's on YouTube, which I'll, I'll drop in the comments. They asked essentially, that whole documentary asks, what is a world where we love black people as much as we love black culture. And what is that world? Wow. What is that world? In your bio And in your work around Black joy through the Black Joy Museum and the archival work that I, that I see you doing and know that you do as well, how is all this connected to kind of protection and recognition of the Harlem Renaissance and black arts movement? I know that that's important to you, and so I wanted to give you some time to, to talk about that too. So just this idea that there's an aesthetic that is inherent, and you spoke about, you know, Black joy as a fine art daily, you know, activity, the, the do-rag, those are art, art pieces, fine art. That hold our stories. I have complex feelings and thinking about um what makes an archive, who protects it, who owns it. When I think of the the archives that I've engaged with and how they're so many square feet and, uh, you know, climate control, uh, what, what is the expense of that and what is the meaning of um starting with all of these things and keeping them out of reach. Collecting things that are like untouchable and you have to run a certain kind of gauntlet to have access to them. sterilizing the experience of the of the of the thing of the experiment. And why are you collecting it? Why are you hoarding it? Why is it unavailable? Um, what's you're interested in? I'm just trying to figure out how do you create something spontaneous. Just based on your proximity to like just the places I go every day, catching a dad grab his baby's hand to cross the street. This is a moment of of black joy. Um, I know it because I see it every day, but there feels like there for me an urgency to share it again as evidence, you know, because so many of the narratives, like you need evidence to show up in a court of law, right, to, you know, prove innocence or, you know, I guess it's not innocence, but um. Culpability I feel like we need to have evidence that we exist as something other than the scene of the crime. There's a film by an artist named Thay Thay Williams, I believe, um, shout out to Tahay because I, I love her work and I just met with her and she made a film called Proof, um, and it was in many ways it was her mirroring or her unpacking her dealings with grief of losing her sister, and she started to collect. And request and gather all the images of, of joy and just images of being from her, from her black family and showed them throughout this film as she talked about her sister's life and her sister's legacy and her experiences with grief and she talked about the film being kind of, kind of centering proof, proof that we were here, proof that her sister existed, proof that there was joy, and I saw that as also like very connected to Tina Camp's work. Around listening to images and, and thinking about the images that often define us when we are gone. And how we can take control of those images, you know, to say like this is, this is who we are and this is evidence that we had joy, that we were here. I think all of that is very connected to what, to what you're saying. The evidence part is like. Monumental for me because it's very connected to the emergence, because sometimes I feel that because of the things that we may deal with in our everyday black life where we're conditioned to think we have to deal with, conditioned to think that we have to be booked and busy as a form of as a form of recognition, right, or that our excellence is about labor and not like our rest. I'm so glad. Young people are having these conversations. Are you? Oh, I'm young girl. My 4th birthday is Monday. I'm 34 years. I appreciate that. I'm so glad that. I have been through all the things that I've been through to get me at this institution and yet still I found the person who is centering black joy in Philadelphia, you know, that's how, that's the power of black people when you don't just kind of look for the blackness or black culture, but you're looking for the people is that I, you know, I could very well go to the Penn library and read about black joy. You know, like, where is the \*\*\* that's doing it, you know what I mean? that is complicating it and that's self-emergent Black Joy, you know, and so I think it's like this connection, shout out to Mui who introduced us. Um, I was at the Black Joy Symposium, which I want you to talk about. Um, I met Gabrielle Saville because of you. Yeah, Gabrielle Saville spoke in my class because of you. Um, so it's just like there's something magical science fictiony. I'm thinking about Octavia Octavia right now. There's something beautiful about the way that black people just find each other and been doing it and doing it. Now it's kind of feels like it's in vogue and and and I feel like we have to be careful, you know. Because the co-optation is, is already afoot, you know, you see Black joy being now trendy. That's why we have to talk about it in these ways to make sure that we're not just getting archived as it's trendy, it's running through flower fields or it's um capitalism or it's buying stuff, you know. I love that like you could put it on, you know, the \*\*\* that are just putting flowers in their hair and saying that they're queer friendly now. I haven't seen that. Oh, but you know what I'm talking about the performative ways, um, yeah, yeah. And so and that's that's tricky to me, um. Cause how do you do it? I mean, it, it comes down to integrity, I think, amongst uh artists and And I ain't mad at nobody who has a payday in a capitalist world. We're just figuring out how to how to make it work for us, but I'm really trying to figure out how to, um, at least in my own life, without judgment, dismantle um those structures for me, like, you know, how much can I grow that I can eat? How much, how much independence can I reclaim? How can I eliminate talking to white people every day? Because when you talked about walking down the street and seeing the black dad grab his son's hand, and that's something that you see every day, like how can we hold on to that as the neighborhood? And I feel like how come somebody else gets to tell the story about how black fathers ain't shit and ain't never been shit. Like Why does that get to be the prevailing narrative when I see black fathers every day, whether they are with the mother or not, who are doing the things. That's why you need access to a camera. You don't necessarily need to be at the at the institution teaching about that or theorizing it. And. And that was my that was my reality. I was given a camera as a media apprentice with Women's Mobile Museum. And so when I decided to create the Museum of Black Joy, which began January 1, 2020. And I said I'm gonna find an image every day for 365 days a year of the year and just put it up on a website. And then of course the pandemic hit and so things shift, but it was just like this is a reaction to because I stopped believing my own reality because the media narrative was so strong that I was beginning to internalize. A story that I'm not living in a black neighborhood. I felt like I had to do it for my own mental health, and then it kind of became a practice, which is why I love Gabrielle Sivil's keynote. Like it's a practice. Not just a theory. Right, and it's something other than even beyond me capturing images. I hate that word capturing, um. You know, communicating images. It's a choice I can make to how I respond to things. And I have to recalibrate daily when I'm in situations that are trying to take me, as Toni Morrison says, these distractions. So now instead of doing what brings me joy, I'm off fighting a battle with the institution. And being exhausted. Say that. And so understanding this as a practice and a ritual that I control from my center. I mean, it's really been life changing for me. And to choose it daily. That's where agency comes in that I think a lot a lot of my work and my filmmaking around centering the everyday black life as a form of fine art is exercising that agency to transform my body from being focused or reduced to survival and remembering archiving. Recognizing are thriving and our goal towards thriving and we can be poor and thriving. The joy is not just tied to having money, yet still, because of the nature of where we are. Money is is always welcome, right? But what about this economy of, uh, you know, cause what do you need money for? So this economy of like A meal In good company, yeah, mutual aid. Yes, yes, you know, that is all, well, that's all true. But I think when we're in these institutions, it's like I don't want you to come. I wrestle with this every day of like I teach Black joy to my students. I bring in my aunties and I bring in my own images into the classroom, but I still wrestle with like how much do I want to reveal, right? I'd rather you give me this institution. I'd rather you give me money to go out and do the work, but I don't know if I want, I don't know if I want to bring you to, to Golden Dragon. I don't know if I want to bring you to, to West Philly and. My neighbor Keith across the street that sits on his his porch every day and like by him being an older black man who's retired, just sitting on his porch in a home that he owns brings me joy. I don't know if I want them to come with me to meet Keith. I think when I leave my house every morning and Keith says, How's it going, Chaz? Good morning, Chaz. I feel like I want to keep that for myself, and I'm learning from Keith. He's he's influencing my black joy just seeing this \*\*\* like, you know, sit on his porch like I lived a life. It was dope, and now I'm sitting on my porch just chilling in the house that I own, like that is joyful for me, and I may write about that or bring it to to folks like you, but I wrestle with how much do we reveal to these institutions. You know, if you got a big gig right now with the ICA or whatever museum is, is big name here, how much of the black joy. Do you share and because there's also joy in keeping it like, like the barbecue has to be ours, you know, like nobody knows how my grandmother makes mac and cheese. I want some of my friends I'm like, yeah, you can come over and try the mac and cheese, but some of them I'm like, I don't know if I want you to to experience that. So I, that's a question for you is like in doing work that is grounded in Black joys practice, how do you balance keeping that image that you see in your neighborhood every day for you? And sharing it. The reason why it is embedded as a digital space right now. I can afford that regardless. I have the camera. I have the time. You don't need to come in and help you and I feel like more people than not have access to the internet. And, and now I'm working on a couple projects where I want to bring in a mobile museum with me to the bus stop. I could just show up, um, I got uh some funding to create this mobile museum that will have a charging station, so it's like. I want to uh push back a little bit against this idea. Oh, black people need aesthetic experiences. I'm like, everybody needs an aesthetic, an aesthetic experience, but we also need to charge our phones and we need like the real stuff too, so I'm trying to combine something useful with, you know, something beautiful and artful, let's do it both and like charge your phone while we hang out here on the bus stop. And like, you know, get on this mobile hotspot and let's, you know, let's have, let's be close to each other, because I, I believe in proximity. Everything I learned that matters to me was like some poet dropping science because I was in the room with them. You write poems, right? I do. You gonna give us a poem tonight? I'm not. I respect the no from a black woman. Well, because uh my poetry mostly has been about trying to um come to come to terms with the move bombing. So most of my poetry that I've written is embedded in the trauma, and I'm moving beyond that now, like I and and oddly enough. Writing joy is. At the moment still beyond me. And it's funny because in doing the Black Joy symposium, I reached out to a lot of poets. And they didn't really have a body of work. Uh, that spoke to joy or love, maybe sex, but not love. Their poetry I have so much to say is embedded in the trauma and how much of that do you feel is tied to seeking recognition from the institution, institution broadly defined, because as a, as an emerging filmmaker, and I say not an emerging filmmaker but also a self-emergent filmmaker, someone that didn't go to film school but is just using the camera to center black life as a form of fine art as I see it every day like you said. I find that in entering the film festival space, whether it's Black Film Festival or non, um, a lot of the work of other black filmmakers, emergent black artists who are getting into these institutional spaces and getting the grants, you see, like if you just walk down the metaphorical like hallway of these spaces, a lot of the work is about trauma, it's about the struggle, it's about the the storm and I'm wondering. How much of that is influenced by us feeling. For us leaning into the ways that sometimes these bigger institutions are only invested in kind of funding. That story, how are you dealing with police violence? How are you, you know, working through poverty? How did you make it to the University of Pennsylvania in spite of this and that and that and that has been something I've been reflecting with, with a lot of my other, um, media friends in particular one of my friends, um, amargin Christian who's at Northwestern in Chicago, like Chicago, for example, right? Like if we listen to the media we would think that Chicago is just like burning. Yeah, and. You're hitting on something that I don't have the answer to, but it's a, it's a, it's a feeling that I have experience of like it feels like there's, it's leaning more towards this than that, you know, and where do you think that's coming from? You know, I think part of it is because until recently. It felt um. You know, there was this narrative, black people don't get therapy, but you know, so there was an expectation that we wouldn't be well and we didn't have access to wellness and healing. And I think a lot of the art has been. The medicine, the way of dealing, the naming of the things that are unsayable, which makes it very much about the trauma, the struggle in response to it. So I think it has been a healing process to make this art that deals with the things that have been generationally unspeakable. And there is then the marketing and the and then the what can be funded. Generationally, we haven't given we haven't given ourselves the language of joy. Your generation is doing a better job of naming things that my generation didn't know. It was even nameable. When my class at Penn, the final project was to create a piece of media that represents a part of you that you feel is either underrepresented, misrepresented, or not talked about at all in the, the mainstream like media stratosphere. And one of my students who goes to Penn, of course, black from Philly, from West Philly, um, or North Philly rather, and um they interviewed their mother. And they are a student that refuses to assimilate to this kind of pen thing. They're here because their family kind of told them like this is gonna be the place is going to give you resources, etc. but they're very like grounded in their blackness. They're not interested in like, you know, doing what we think of as like the pen thing, right? Um, they don't really, they see the Ivy League institution as like, uh. What can I get out of this? Don't waste my time. Um, in fact, even in our class, she very much talks to the black students only. But long story short, in her project, she asked, and she asked her mother about Black joy, same ways that we're talking about it. And one of the things that she wrote about that I found as a black man teaching this class, black queer man, yes, but I still have blind spots because of the ways that I've been socialized as a man. When people ask me about my joy, I can think about my joy, mine. And she said that it was really surprising and difficult to ask her mother about what brings her mother black joy, what brings her mother joy, because a lot of the answers constantly were tied to care, to caring for others to, uh, my joy comes from seeing you at Penn. My joy comes from, and she was saying that it was very hard to like kind of isolate it and really get her mother to talk about like what brings you joy and. I hear that as a generational difference, um, because I think about that with my grandmother too. I'm very close with my grandmother and a lot of her existence, even when you ask her very eye centered questions, what brings you joy, Grandma? What do you want to do today? It's often so much about us, so much about her grandkids as long as we're good, she's good. And it's like, but now that I'm. Good in terms of my needs are met. I'm eating. I can, I can secure food, etc. I wanna learn from and know about your joy, and I find that it's, I was taken aback by the student's project because I think she uncovered a blind spot that I even had as a professor saying like go out and ask your family, your black family about joy and her saying like I, I couldn't get it from my mother. I couldn't get an individual answer right? Many, many of them didn't have the language for it because it wasn't. Available, like you are. You know that that thing we say we're on your shoulders. We are on your shoulders, you. Um, have foregone. Your Individual expectation. Of joy and pleasure to raise up the next generation. In one hand, it's like it's so noble and on the other hand it's so sad. And at the same time. I'm a witness to a great many of that. They wouldn't name it. But they embodied it, you know. At kitchen tables with jelly jar glasses full of gin and cigarette smoke. Um, my whole childhood is drenched in smoke, like, you know, every family's drenched in Jamaicans cakes and cigarette smoke rum and jerk chicken. But right, but sitting around tables and they might not be able to name certain things. Yeah, but it's happening in the aesthetics. That's that's real. But they would never name it, um, and they would never. Think of the individual because that generation, it was like it was community. What does the community need? What does my family need? It was never even that expression of like my grandmother when I stayed with her as a child and even even as an adult, like. I stay with her. We have dinner together, then I go out with my friends and her calling me at 2 a.m. talking about when are you coming home because I can't go to sleep until you get in. Even that is beyond my comprehension because again as someone that socializes as a man, I'm like, I'm sleeping good and when I'm tired. That's right. And the fact that. Her rest is tied to like, I don't care how long you stay out, just tell me if you're coming home at 2 or 4 because I can't go to sleep until you're here. So I might knit a sweater. When you really think about and unpack, not to intellectualize too much, but when you unpack those mundane everyday expressions, it's so much about them just not centering the self, right? And so historically. What it means when someone hasn't returned home. Yeah. And and what might need to be done. It's all being inherited. Yeah. You know, there's been a lot of uh information about uh generational trauma, but it's interesting to map. There's generational joy too. Period. That's what we are archiving by having this combo. And again, it's the importance of naming things. Because the other side gets so much time. And space and and funding that's why I was saying earlier like I was pushing back in terms of like we can't not think about the money because the funding is going this way versus that way and that is something that I'm interested in. Intersecting, diverging, because I see it. Yeah, and it's complicated. I see it in my body as someone that is grieving their mother right now, but wrestling with working in the institution at a very early stage of my academic career, I can't go to another symposium or exhibition or lecture about black pain, black trauma. Because one of the things about grief that I'm. So struck by is that it is mine and grieving my mother is something that doesn't feel like it's a pain that's caused by the white person over there. It's, it's a, it's a, it's a, it's like the one thing that unifies us in a very fucked up way. It's like grief is something that we will all experience and I feel like I wanna. Protect how I heal through this, and I just feel like my body can't take hearing about another police shooting or going to an academic talk by some white person that's kind of theorizing black life because I am in for that. And I mean, you know, I, I absolutely um feel and understand that. In that way that America wants you to resolve your grief in 3 days, you know and get back to like I created this podcast series. And got money from it and applied and did all the paperwork that the white folks here needed me to do because I don't want to, I can't, I can only talk to you for 1 hour and 18 minutes because that's where I am right now. You know, and the fact that we got to fill out forms and grant applications and W-9s to do that, so be it. I will do what I need to do to sit. Where we can create a space where we can create a space where we can talk about the personal, the ice cream, and, and the intellectual and the joy, we do it all. That's the innovation and the brilliance and the beauty of just like being black. And now I'm thinking Heath Bar Crunch. I don't even know if they make that anymore. But it is a base. The one thing I'm I'm I am. I, I like briars, but you know, when I, when I get something good in my life, like a new job or funding, whatever, it's talenty for me. She's she's a little small little thing. But as the white people would say, you can keep it. You can keep the small little thing and you put your salad in it. I like that that tent, the mango one, the sorbet. I'm an ice cream girl. Like ice cream brings me joy, but you know, I'm also turning 34, so I'm trying to think about, OK, Talenty has a lot of non-dairy options. You can have it, you know, late night and not feel like it's sitting on you. But yeah, I mean, ice cream is a thing that brings strawberry is very good. Strawberry is not a go to, but briar strawberry, yeah. And when I was from when I was a child, my grandmother used to buy coffee ice cream all the time and we would just sit and and eat briars, or my grandma would say things like when I would come home from college break, she would say. I'm going to the grocery store to get the coffee ice cream before you get in because she knew, you know, so again it's pure joy, you know. So I um And taking care of that thing that you share together, like honoring it. It's known. I know my baby likes coffee ice cream. I'm gonna have it when they come, you know, there's a and I think it's uh. Sassafari, Cyprus and Indigo and Tazaki Shanga book and just like in the middle of it, she's got a recipe and I think it's a catfish the way Alfred likes it. And I just love that. Like to me it's just such a signifier. Uh, it's not the way I like it. It's the way Alfred likes it. My um my stepdad. This episode, this episode has to be titled something with Ice Cream because they're thinking about so many black stories through my stepdad. Who loved us like we were his own children. We would have, yes, we would have ice cream. As a family all the time, but my mom was like very like she raised us to be very independent, so she would buy the ice cream and then we all come downstairs and dish it together and then go our separate corners of the house and enjoy it. My sister maybe watching a show in her room, my mom eating it in the kitchen at the table with my stepdad, me in my room playing video games, eating ice cream like she always provided, but allowed us the agency to go and do what we needed to do once we got the nourishment and my stepdad Tony would put ice cream in the microwave. Because he always liked it just a little bit, just a little bit soft and we thought that was so weird as kids, but when we were talking earlier about agency, I was just thinking about how like we made fun of him and laughed at him, but But when we would bring Tony ice cream, like years later, I would always know, put it in the microwave for 20 seconds or 10 seconds before you bring it to him. And so just you're there's something beautiful about about that. That's the way Alfred likes it and we all shared love of ice cream. Handled Individually, like we all love it, it's provided, but you get to be yourself. As we end this episode soon, I'm taking out the ice cream and I'm submitting the receipt to Penn. They will sponsor the Center for Media at Risk. We thank you for sponsoring our joy. Where are we going? Is there a black owned ice cream spot that you love? There's one in Richmond where I just moved here from called Ruby Scoops. We might have to go to Richmond. I have to do a road trip. Can we put that receipt in? They don't want to talk about that. They don't want to talk about that. I don't know what's your ice cream in Philly? Oh, I'm just I just pick it up and like I like going to the grocery store because I like the journey of it. Like I like to look at every Talent or briar's flavor and really think how. I I think is just tied to, I think it's expensive, so we think it's good. I don't know that the ras. They have a key lime, which I will critique and say it doesn't have enough lime for me. It's more milk of vibe. So we need to get a key lime pie and smash it. you pie? I do. I love it. Me too. I have a friend named Robin makes a key lime pie. It's like, it's a key lime pie that can only be made by my black friend Robin. It it's just, it's fire. Can we submit this receipt. To to make us a. Before we close, I want to give you the space to say anything that you feel like you definitely want people to know that you may have forgotten to say or just anything that you're vibing with, and then let people know how. How they can support you, um, in tangible ways. I think that it's one thing for white folks and everyone in general, but white folks in particular, to listen to this episode and gain, you know, nourishment and intellectualism from the vibes and the game that we're spitting. But that's still tied to tangible support. So, um, you can check out my website, museumolackjoy.com. I do believe I have the donate button. Live and ready. Also, you know, honestly, if you have resources right now. Think about Phil abundance here in Philadelphia. People are, are, are. Highly at risk right now with prices going up at the grocery store, um. Let's not um let anybody go hungry, you know it doesn't have to be working here I have learned to be. There's, there is more than enough and no excuse. Right, right, so if you can feed somebody, feed somebody, um. And you can feed somebody. You can't, yeah. And um. I, I guess, um, I, I have to get better at, um, knowing how to answer that question. Um, use this podcast as a way to how can folks support Andrea? So, honestly, right now you can go to museumolackjoy.com and hit up the donations because I do wanna do an actual full-fledged uh Black Joy symposium this year, last year we were just kinda pulling it together. People were doing me favors, um, but I would like to pay artists their price. Not be like, oh, could you do this for me? It's a proof of concept. I, you know, I really wanna bring some uh conversations around joy at the end of the year because we've been through so much, um, so I would like to formalize the Black Joy symposium and um. You've got my support and I would love to be a part of it in any capacity that I can. Yeah, we'll keep talking um because I think maybe this year it can we can be in person in some venues and I would love to bring your work forward, you know, uh. Maybe share a black joy syllabus, you know, make it uh accessible while um making sure that the creators. Get the benefit of resources and and not have it just run off with somebody else, creating a platform that enriches them. Yeah. No, I mean I I. And, and I, I would like to say um. You know, I, I just lost my mother as well, um, and, uh. So I hear you about this grief and and how dimensional it is um and it doesn't come. It doesn't come easy. And when it does come right now, like as I'm experiencing it in this room. It's like I just, I wrestle with like, I don't know, I don't even know if I want to edit this episode and share it to other people. Maybe this episode was just for me. And that is like the, that's, that's the kind of struggle, you know, um, when you were grieving a black woman from who you came from, I think that. When you experience a good day, you just wanna like hold on to it. You don't necessarily need to edit it and share it out. You maybe, maybe this is for me to just listen to. And being a black professor that is dealing with these things now at this institution in Philadelphia, it's it's hard to figure out where, where, where can I be right now. You know, Frederick Douglass has a quote. This is a man who escaped enslavement. And he, he says, and I, I'm gonna misquote it, but I'll send it to you, um, the actual quote, um. Nowhere. Has he found a a location um more. Racist, he says more something against color than Philadelphia. He's never, this is a man who has maybe Richmond, I know it's Virginia, but has, uh, escaped enslavement. And he says that he has never found a place more uh prejudice against color than Philadelphia, so any of these things that you are sensing in the atmosphere here are real, it's not your imagination, um. It's real, it's an embedded. And of course, in this institution, it would have to be embedded, one of the earliest universities, um. Created by a slaveholder who they love to shout out. Yes. Andrea, I thank you so much for coming on to Black Matter podcast and the Center for Media at Risk podcast. I want to thank the Annenberg School for communication, um, for the space and giving me the time to do this, compensating us to do this. The Black Joy Museum, big, big, big shout out and the D archive. Yes, hi, hi, hi. I'm gonna put all those links into the caption curve, it's a meditation for myself moving through the grief of that. Thank you so much for your time today, and I am closing out today. We're going to get ice cream. We're going out to dinner soon and we will continue this this conversation on the mic and off the mic. Happy Friday, everybody. Peace. Blessings manifest with. what you