

Layla: I'm Layla Saad, and my life is driven by one burning question: How can I become a good ancestor? How can I create a legacy of healing and liberation for those who are here in this lifetime and those who will come after I'm gone? In my pursuit to answer this question, I'm interviewing change-makers and culture-shapers who are also exploring that question themselves in the way that they live and lead their life. It's my intention that these conversations will help you find your own answers to that question too. Welcome to Good Ancestor Podcast.

Candice Brathwaite is a mother of two and the founder of the UK-based initiative Make Motherhood Diverse which seeks to challenge the usually singular narrative of motherhood. She's also a writer and influencer and her first book is *I Am Not Your Baby Mother*, an urgent part memoir, part manifesto book about black British motherhood.

Okay, hello, everybody, and welcome back to Good Ancestor Podcast. I am here with my darling dear friend, Candice Brathwaite. The first time we met, it was the other way around. She was interviewing me. So I get to now return the favor to this amazing being and I know this is gonna be an incredible conversation so welcome, Candice.

Candice: Oh, thank you for having me. Thank you so much.

Layla: Thank you. I had so much fun and it's really wild to think about the fact that when we were last together, that was just a few months ago and I was touring in the UK for my book tour. I got the chance to be in conversation with you at Waterstones and I traveled to Nottingham and to Scotland and then back to London and now we're home, social distancing.

Candice: It happened so quickly —

Layla: So quickly.

Candice: — but it also feels like it's a new year. It feels like 2021 —

Layla: Or 2020.5.

Candice: The speed with which we've had to change our lives has taken my breath away and yet I just remember us having a good time. Even hugging people —

Layla: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Candice: — is now so foreign and also heartbreaking, yeah, but we do it for the safety of others —

Layla: Of others, right. Staying our butts at home, exactly.

Candice: Listen.

Layla: Alright, let's kick off with our first question, Candice. I've had the pleasure of having an advance copy of your book, *I Am Not Your Baby Mother*, and so I feel like I'm gonna know some of the answers to this question but I can't wait for you to share it with our listeners. Who are some of the ancestors, living or transitioned, familial or societal, who've influenced you on your journey?

Candice: Definitely my dad, who has transitioned. I feel him so heavily at very strange times. Never the times when I'm sad or down, but if I'm in the middle of a business deal, he's literally all up in my business. He's like, "Do not let them bluff you, do not let them cheat you, remember my ways of moving," and I'm really, really grateful to him for that guidance from afar. Living, definitely my maternal granddad, without a doubt. So, interestingly, even though I am a staunch feminist, a lot of male energy set a belief in me, two really strong men who, without them, you wouldn't know who Candice Brathwaite is, for sure, and I feel like — and this is not to dismiss the work that women have done in my life, but I feel like without those two men, I wouldn't be the woman I am which is really interesting.

Layla: Yeah. I sense that and I could get that from reading your book, that they seemed to have both instilled in you a great sense of self-worth and I think with your grandfather, your maternal grandfather, it felt like as I was reading it, he really gave you the permission to be all of yourself, right? If you need to cry, cry. He raised you. You weren't raised in the beginning by your mon and your dad, it was your maternal grandfather who raised you.

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Right? So this maternal-paternal energy happening for you and then with your father, I really got that sense that he really taught you these skills and to be really alert and to be aware, don't let people fool you, don't let people run you, have common sense, and know how to take care of yourself, which is so priceless.

Candice: Yeah. Their energies combined because before it was hip to lobby for men taking time off work for paternity and all of that stuff, like my granddad was doing this at a time where his friends would mock him, like, "You're a stay-at-home man, what even is that? Are you wearing the clothes?" What does that even mean? And so without knowing it, my granddad especially gave me an example of perhaps the man who would be good for me because I know I can't iron, I don't know what the best spot in the house is, and to have been doing this parenting thing with a West African man, born in West Africa, who is completely comfortable with me not doing the things that are feminine, I'm like, that is something that was shown to me from a really early age.

Layla: Right.

Candice: I'm really grateful for it because it means that I can focus on doing what I am good at which most women aren't allowed to say, especially black women not allowed to say. I'm good at making money.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: And I need the space to do that, but I can't think about business and also be like, "Oh, are the kids' school uniform ironed?" I can't do —

Layla: Right. Right, right, right, and I love this so much because, as I was reading your book and I was telling you before we hit record that I was reading a part of your book today and it was the chapter in which you were talking about you were pregnant with Esmé and you really wanted a Bugaboo pushchair and first of all, this is hilarious to me 'cause I remember, for us, the pushchair was a huge thing. We got — we didn't get Bugaboo but we got what has now become the norm, at least here in Qatar, which is the Swedish Stokke, I don't know how you pronounce it —

Candice: Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Layla: When we got it, nobody had it so we were like, oh, we are so much pride, like the Mercedes-Benz, right, of pushchairs, but I remember reading your chapter on that and you were talking about you wanted to buy this pushchair and you knew it was, what, £1,300 and, at that time, you weren't making a lot of money like you are now and you said to your husband this is how much it is and he said, "Are you mad? Is the pushchair also gonna send our kid to Oxford University?" And I cackled, like I laughed so hard and my husband who's sitting next to me, he's like, "What's so funny?" So I read it to him and he goes, "That sounds like me," like — I'm like, 'cause he's very African. It's a very African thing to say.

Candice: He was like, "Do we not have some old bedsheets, and just tie the baby to your back," and I was like, "Listen, I'm gonna be this new mom and flourish."

Layla: Right.

Candice: And I think I say it some chapters down, or maybe even in the same chapter, it completely warms me up when people, normally white people, chastise young, black people for wanting to look good. I'm not, listen, for a long time, that's all we had. All we had was our Sunday best. We weren't even allowed to interact with certain people so from our look alone, we were trying to create this demeanor which more often than not didn't necessarily match what we had in our pockets.

Layla: Right, and also didn't match up with the message that was being given to us of being inferior, like that look of clean, perfect, wearing beautiful things, is a survival mechanism, right? It's the rebellion, it's a revolt of sorts, to say I'm not what you're saying I am.

Candice: Exactly.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: For me, in that moment, buying that pushchair was just another way of putting a pretty plaster on a gangrene limb. I knew good and well that trying to even acquire something like that would mean it was **[inaudible 00:09:38]** eating rice at home for the rest of the month. But I'm already petrified of becoming a mum, becoming a mum in a space that does not respect black motherhood or idea that a black family can be unified, so I'm quickly thinking, right, how many ways can I protect myself from the constant stereotypes that I know are about to come my way? And for some reason, for me, that manifested in a pushchair which is so strange.

Layla: Oh, I don't think it is, 'cause in reading *I Am Not Your Baby Mother*, was reminded of so many things from my first pregnancy. I remember reading Ina May Gaskin's book. I remember reading *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, right? I remember seeing the images of motherhood and all it was was white, white, white, white, white, and these standards of what good motherhood looked like, and to be clear, there's a difference between wanting good things for your child versus trying to fit into a model of what is seen as somebody who's thriving because they have certain things versus somebody who's seen as being lesser than because they don't have those brand names or they don't have those things, and it's not to say — and I really wanna talk about money in this conversation because you're such a huge advocate for that and it's one of the reasons I so love and respect you, but I want to create a legacy of multigenerational wealth for my family and I wanna do it on my terms —

Candice: Yes.

Layla: — and not because of what white supremacy says about me.

Candice: Yes.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Completely. I've gone a few chapters **[inaudible 00:11:18]** and I read that stuff back to myself. I was like, ah, you are making that choice from a place of white supremacy.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Even now becoming a mother, I'm still mothering myself through some things —

Layla: Absolutely.

Candice: — I'm like, "Oh, girl, check yourself. That was actually for their gaze, not even for you —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — because you learn this through the act of doing but now on my second child, I was like, “Is it safe? Is it kinda cute?”

Layla: Right, right —

Candice: Would it fit my budget? Then we’re good to go.”

Layla: Right. Not what are the mums in the mums group gonna say when I rock up, right.

Candice: Nothing, but I had to learn through that process and I think writing this book just made me grapple with a lot. Even my editor is like once I’ve handed it in, she was like, “And you’re going back to therapy, yes?” I was like, “No, mind your business. Mind your business. Don’t put pressure on me.” Because it was the book that I consistently ran away from writing.

Layla: And I can feel that, so as I was reading it, first of all, I wanna say thank you for this huge gift. It’s the first book of its kind for me to see as a black British mother, although not being a British mother in Britain, but still a black British mother, and to be able to — it’s like you have this great mesh between sharing your personal stories and your personal experiences, some of which are gut-wrenching, and we can talk about some of those, and meshing it with some of the statistics that we see coming out of the UK about black motherhood, black teenagers, black mental health, and it’s this great gift, it’s this teaching tool, yes, but it’s you, you literally took from, as my mum would say, like in the sort of Swahili translation “from your womb,” you wrote it from like the remnants of your womb to get this out into the world and it really shows. I just wanna say thank you because I think this is a book that everybody can get so much from, all races, people of all races, people of all genders can get so much from this book.

Candice: Oh, thank you. Thank you.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Thank you because it was — it was tough.

Layla: Yeah. So there were two incidents in your book, and I’m about 70 percent through the book, but there were two and I’m about to hit that third one, a third incident that I know is gonna make me clutch my pearls or like have to put the book down, right? The first one was — so continuing the story of getting the Bugaboo when you actually found the secondhand one and you went to go buy it, went to go pick it up, I’m sure that story. The second one was what happened five days after giving birth to Esmé, your firstborn.

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Absolutely terrifying. The third one is the chapter I’ve just started where you’ve been called by Esmé’s schoolteacher to go the school and I’m like what is about to

happen? I'm not ready for this. I'm like I know what's coming but I don't, I just don't wanna read it.

Candice: Listen. Listen. And it's so funny. A friend recently read it and she's like, "Girl, you don't let the reader breathe until like chapter 3." Chapter 3 is when there was that oh, I can go and get — grab a coffee. She was like how are you putting people in a chokehold from page —

Layla: Yes.

Candice: And I said to her, it's — I can't wait for people to read it because the book comes out May 28<sup>th</sup> and if people are ready to review it May 29<sup>th</sup>, you have played yourself because I, the writer, am still grappling with what I've given people.

Layla: Right.

Candice: So, you know, I don't wanna lie to anyone, it's not a gung ho read, it's not a "I'm just gonna chill out on a Saturday and read this cover to cover" because if you're really invested in it, you need to take breaks. You need to allow yourself to feel whatever that book stirs up in you. You need to go and have conversations with yourself and other people and, like I said, it's the book that ran me down because I've gone through six proposals before finally submitting myself to this idea because every publisher was like, "Oh, can't you write about motherhood?" and I was like no. No. You guys are playing games with this motherhood parenting field and I don't want no part of that. You've really cheapened the industry here.

Layla: Right, right, and the thing is, the entire book is about motherhood. So the story of you, and not to give too much away, but you get this Bugaboo but you have to go buy it from a white woman in this sort of middle-class neighborhood that's been gentrified and you're there with your sister who I also had the pleasure of meeting, she's beautiful, amazing, and her assumption when she opens the door is that you are a charity worker. You're five months pregnant, so, tired, heavy, right?

Candice: And then also being that bridge between — or that wall between her and my sister because my sister will pounce. My sister was like, "Oh, girl, she did not just think —" and then her not allowing me in the house, not wanting to get the chain off the door. What's this rolling theme of my progression and I was like — it threw me off in so many ways because I'm born and raised in London, I have turned up in the area that I have been to before through an ex-boyfriend —

Layla: Right. It looked different back then, right. Right.

Candice: I was so blown away and that was my first experience of feeling judged as a mother and the baby's not even here yet.

Layla: Yeah, right.

Candice: And, you know, I don't put it in the book but I think the reader understands like I pushed that pushchair away thinking, "Well, now you see why I at least had to get the pushchair —"

Layla: Right, right.

Candice: I'm here trying to buy a secondhand pram and being made to feel small for even that act. I knew in that moment my blackness really scared her, you know? My name's Candice Brathwaite, very few people are like —

Layla: They didn't know what to expect and that really segues into a quote that I wrote down from your book around naming and it was the moment when you're trying to choose a name for Esmé and the reason it stuck out for me was I remember my mum saying to us growing up that she chose, you know, we're Muslims so we're gonna have Muslim names and we're gonna stick out anyway, but she said, "I chose names that were simple and easy so that white people would find it easy to say your names and it wouldn't be difficult for them." And so the quote from your book, you say, "We know that something as seemingly innocent as choosing a name for our child has to be carefully curated so it doesn't cause offense."

Candice: Yeah. Yeah.

Layla: Yeah. And you have — you had, like you said, a name that can be racially ambiguous if you don't see the person but your husband does not.

Candice: At all.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And there was this internal and external struggle with me trying to honor his culture which by proxy is my culture —

Layla: That's right.

Candice: I think it shows through the book as well that, for a long time, I put being black British before being black or the idea of even being black, being black African —

Layla: African, right.

Candice: — and now having a child with a West African man, I was like, again, girl, you played yourself, and there's so much about the richness of your lineage and history that you perhaps weren't even prepared to investigate because white Britain had told you don't do that. Don't do that. Assimilation is the only way to make it through this game and to go **[inaudible 00:19:45]** on a child with a man who is born the majority is mind-blowing.

Layla: Right, right, right, like 'cause he's not contending with the same things that you're contending with. He's had a different conditioning growing up that informs how

he sees the world and how he sees himself in the world, I'm guessing as well, yeah.

Candice: And then, so we were like two bulls all the time because, and only now, Esmé is 6, he's like, "You're right, I truly didn't get it. I didn't get how so much of what you were trying to do with her name and the school she was gonna was all about protection."

Layla: Right.

Candice: Because he was like, "I was seeing it from my perspective," which is not of a privileged African man who thinks his class is kingly wherever he goes and I have been raised in a space to feel like the minority and to be small and to have a child with someone like that, there has been an education on both sides.

Layla: Right, right.

Candice: But for the betterment of both of our children, and even in naming Esmé, it was really important to me that her middle name had meaning and that she is really firm about what her last name is because in naming her, I just thought, oh, there's so much that I can teach her just through this act and I know whilst I don't wanna make life difficult for her from a job-seeking, Western money-making perspective, I want her to understand that when I die, should nature take its course in the way I hope it does, she knows that, oh, no, mum told me it was okay to investigate this part of myself and I think through the strength of her name and whenever her Nigerian granddad greets her, it's with her full Nigerian name, I'm like, yeah, you get it, and that's important to me because that's something I don't have.

Layla: Right, right. Right. Right. So, how old was your husband when he came to the UK?

Candice: How old was he? Eighteen?

Layla: Yeah. Yeah. So he —

Candice: He arrived not even so fully formed but also with the ego of someone in their —

Layla: Right, right, right, right, right, 'cause I'm thinking of — so my parents are East African immigrants to the UK but in the late '70s, right? They faced a lot of racism at that time and though they grew up and lived the first part of their lives in Africa, they then met in the UK and had me and my brothers there and so they were, especially my mum, very much like you. Very much like gotta get them into a good school, gotta make sure their names are easy for other people to say. All of these things to protect us and I write about a number of things in my book about the ways that she tried to protect us from white supremacy that were in complete love and I think some of the only tools that she had at that time which I'm grateful for and at the same time I'm grateful that I don't have to pass those same things on to my children, but there are so many things to contend with and I love my



name but I also wonder what if my name is Khadija or, you know, Fatima or anything else that was harder or heavier for people to say.

Candice: And the name Layla, you don't know unless you know —

Layla: Unless you know, right? Even though it is an Arabic name, it means "night," that's what Layla means, it means "night," but I've seen people of every race with that name, yeah.

Candice: And my name as well, just like Candice, it doesn't make you think anything.

Layla: Right, right.

Candice: And then Brathwaite is usually incorrectly spelled Braithwaite —

Layla: Right, right.

Candice: Braithwaite is a Scottish name.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Oh, yeah, Candice Braithwaite —

Layla: Yes. A Scottish gal is coming in and you come in.

Candice: And it's just like — but, you know, from my dad's perspective, by the time I arrived, my foot's in the door, now I can wow you. You haven't immediately put my CV to the bottom of the pile because of how you pronounce my name.

Layla: And Austin Channing, who I interviewed in season 1 of this podcast who wrote the book *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Blackness* says her parents named her Austin partly because it was a name of a relative in her family but also so that people would think on her CV that she was a white man —

Candice: Yes.

Layla: — and see — right, so these different ways that our parents try to protect us and then we as parents try to protect our children, and the world that I'm wanting to build is a world where all of us get to live in the fullness of our humanity, where we don't have to make choices on that based on how other people, how dominant culture is going to perceive us and what stories they're going to start telling about us from just hearing the name.

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah. So let's talk about money. And I say that looking like enviously — well, not enviously, 'cause that's not an energy that I wanna project. I wanna say proudly, proudly looking at your collection of designer bags in the background and, you

know, when I first started following you and I think I'd heard about you because we're both published with the same publisher, something like that, and then not too far after that, you posted a post about money and some of the practices that you had and I was there like furiously scribbling notes on this manifestation practices that you do and then me and my friend, Sharona Lautoe, one of my dear friends, were then exchanging notes, "Did you see Candice's post around — I got the app, did you get the app," right? And what I love, love, love about you is you are so unapologetic in money and when the storyline around blackness, being black is poverty, right, the storyline that dominant culture assumes about us. One of the things that me and my friends always say is we hate when we see things where it's an offer and it's like if you're, you know, a person of color, we're gonna give you a discount on this particular thing and it makes the assumption that all of us are in a state where we don't have money, where we don't make money. You are somebody who is so unapologetic in making money and you do it being you and not being something else to get that money, so it's like you hold yourself, Candice, in the fullness of your entire sort of outer identity in the ways that people see you but also your inner self and I'm gonna make this money. I'm not gonna apologize to anyone, including other black people about it, right? And that's the other conversation, right? Around internalized oppression and what we think that we're, you know, worthy of having and how much money we're worthy of making, yeah. Tell me about your journey around that.

Candice: It's been a rocky road and my mum specifically just bad energy with money.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: And it's weaved in little bits through the book but days would come when the bailiffs come before school and you've got to hide and crouch down in the bathroom and I knew, from about my mid-teens, I knew I was like I am completely in control of this feeling and the minute I work out how to do my job every day with a smile on my face, the feeling of poverty will not touch my shoulder ever again. I knew that, but I tried to be really clear about the fact that the feeling came before the facts did. I didn't know how. I didn't know how. I don't come particularly from a line of people who know what best to do with their money but I was like I'm gonna learn. I'm gonna figure it out. I'm just gonna get myself in the best position to attract this and we will go the rest of the way and it's so funny now, especially at this specific time with this pandemic. I tell my management all the time, don't come to me with no feelings about fear around my income 'cause I don't receive it, I'm like I can't hear you, and it's so funny in the last week, I've signed some deals that have really made my eyes water and I'm like now, as we are in this global — we're in this global crackdown where people are really feeling it through their purse but I just don't speak that language because I've been there and it — poverty does not align with where I'm trying to take my family. It's literally a conversation I can't afford to have.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And also I've really grown my faith in money and how deserving I am of it —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and I must admit, that, whilst people might not see it as such, that feeling, the feeling of me being worthy, is really what turns the stomachs of a lot of white people who have a problem with me.

Layla: That's right. So let's talk about that, because when I — so when I did first get to know you and I was — or know of your account and was following you, very quickly after that, there was a whole drama that kicked off and what I saw was disgusting, which was you being attacked by other white mommy bloggers and people in that space and I was looking at it and I was like they're mad, I don't even know the details but I know this is a woman who is unapologetically black, dark-skinned black, right, short-cropped hair, okay, in a beautiful, loving marriage, with a beautiful family and she makes money and we're seeing her make money and that's gotta make some people feel some kind of way, because the attack that came for you was not normal.

Candice: At all, and there were lines, like there was this website where one of them was speaking about me under a pseudonym and one of the ones that really stuck out for me was, "I liked her so much better when she was poor." Like just hold that for a minute. You know, I have been gracious enough, and it is grace for a black woman to show up on the internet and share her life. I have been gracious enough —

Layla: That's right.

Candice: — to let you behind the scenes of my life and for you to watch this growth —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — but you, it hurt you that bad that you had to express that, you know, I was feeling her in the struggle.

Layla: Right, because it's, "Who are you to make that money when I'm not making it and you're black?"

Candice: And you're black.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And she's still in a relationship. My God, let's call someone. It showed up in that trolling situation in a way that it took the wind out of me.

Layla: It took the wind out of me. I watched it go down and I — it literally pulled the rug under — because I know what that's like, for people to come after you, and then the way in which it was done, I was like, they are trying to weaponize something in her past against her but all it does, especially in the way that you spoke about

it, was make me say, "I'm so glad that I follow this woman." That's all it made me feel. I was just like this is an example of how to show up in your full humanity.

Candice: Yes. Yeah. You're not going to shame me into silence.

Layla: That was it. Right.

Candice: And with white people of that caliber, I think the trick they're missing is do you know how many hurdles I have had to clear to even get here? Girl, your little games ain't gonna throw me out so let's just cut to the scene where you are on the floor of the boxing ring and I'm just getting my check and I'm walking off.

Layla: And that's what happened. That's all that happened because it was — I Google your name, I see it coming up in all of these news and media and that's enough to really take a person out, like it's enough —

Candice: I had **[inaudible 00:32:19]** call me and be like your full name is in my Sunday paper and, you know, we set out on this journey as black women knowing intrinsically what the task is. Sometimes, even telling God, listen, you need to bring it down a touch because I am ready for what you want —

Layla: Let me breathe.

Candice: Sir, bring it down —

Layla: Right. Can we stretch out the timeline a little bit?

Candice: What you're asking of me —

Layla: Right.

Candice: At the last quarter of last year, I really felt like God was just cropped up in my doorway like, "Sis, come on now, this is really your chance to do the work, to put your money where your mouth is. You're quick to tell people don't let your past own you. You're quick to tell people strive for more," okay —

Layla: Come up then, right. Right. And you did.

Candice: Even though I did publicly, it was so traumatic personally.

Layla: I can't imagine. I've had a small experience, nothing like what you have experienced, and all I saw in you showing up in your truth and saying this and this and this is what my actual truth is, and all I saw was a flood of support come to you, because first of all we could see what was actually happening —

Candice: Yes.

Layla: — and secondly you spoke your truth, right? But when you said about they don't realize how much you've already had to overcome. When you spoke about like your relationship with money, you had to overcome your mother's story around money, you had to overcome your experiences growing up around money, and you also had to overcome what society is telling you and what we as women of all races, stories that we have, around money. So there's many things happening, right? And you were able to get to where you are now, so when something like that comes, it's like I've had to work so hard to heal. You cannot take my healing away from me.

Candice: You cannot. You cannot. And that for me, coming out of the end of last year and still being here this year, it was transformative.

Layla: What did you feel it gave for you? What do you feel is different pre and post that you —

Candice: That's why I feel is —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Just a new — literally a new level of freedom. At the time, and, you know, I have to do air quotes with whoever tried to use my past to shame me, at the time, of course I was angry. Now I am so grateful. So grateful. I even leave money on the offering plate. I'm like bless them. Because I would not have had the courage to do that myself.

Layla: Right.

Candice: I was grappling for years on that subject. Sometimes even going to bed and thinking, oh, you know, if this story breaks tomorrow, girl, you've really screwed it. And even though I was so scared and so worried, the favor they have done me is insurmountable but you don't really get to hold that feeling until you've cleared, got way past the hurdle, out the arena. And now I'm out of the arena. I just feel so free. I turn up to meetings not wondering if someone's whispering about — and even in the midst of that hoopla, every single brand I worked with were messaging me like, "We don't care. And we're gonna sign you up next year with even more money."

Layla: And do you feel that's because of how you showed up in your life up until that point from a real sense of being fully yourself, being very transparent and very authentic. Do you feel that's what — because, you know, brands can be fickle. You know, they can be like, "Ah, I don't wanna be a part of this actually," or "We're having second thoughts."

Candice: As much as we feel like a society we're moving forward and we're doing all these great things, I feel like for any brand to sign up a bullheaded, dark-skinned black woman, you already —

Layla: You made some calculations, right?

Candice: You already really sat down —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and had some kind of thinking process behind wanting me to represent your brand.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And for some reason, I think it added a little **[inaudible 00:36:52]**. It's like —

Layla: Yeah. Do you think that if this had happened five years ago, there would have been the same response? And I ask this because the space that you're in is notoriously white, as is many spaces, period. We have seen, I mean, we're in 2020, there's a way that I know I can have a conversation called *Me and White Supremacy* in a way that I couldn't have had it five years ago because people were not ready for that conversation, right? And we're not ready for the person holding that conversation to look like me, right? So do you feel like if this had happened five years ago and there's less consciousness around these topics that it might have gone in a different direction?

Candice: Completely. The timing of which, and for anyone at home, it's like that what is this, so I used to be a sex worker, and the timing of which this expose happened was so full of mastery, it's only on God's timing —

Layla: That's right.

Candice: — because #metoo, sex work, just all these conversations on are now coming above the fold —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and I had so many women in my DMs that night and so many women who are very prolific in the areas which they work, who have met me since that time and grabbed my hand and been like, "Girl, you know I used to be a sex worker, right? And I lived in fear every day —

Layla: Wow.

Candice: — that someone is going to do me what they did to you" —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and to be not only come through that but come out smelling like Tom Ford perfume —

Layla: That's right. That's right.

Candice: I sleep a bit easier. Like not if, but when —

Layla: When, right.

Candice: — will not destroy me and you have to trust the timing of God, universe, whatever you wanna call it, in times like that —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — because going public with that post, I was shake, shaking —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and it makes me emotional now thinking about it.

Layla: I remember and I just was — my heart went out to you because all I felt was love for you but I was like I cannot imagine the state that she was in when she wrote this because, yeah, to other people, our secrets are not such a big deal, right? But to us, they're everything.

Candice: And within seconds, this virtual love that just flooded my home, my virtual space, my real home.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: I woke up the next day like just on such a high, knowing that whoever had did that to me had seen that.

Layla: Right.

Candice: They'd seen that.

Layla: Right.

Candice: I actually just, you know, I sat up in bed and I thought what else you got.

Layla: Right. You know, it really makes me think of Maya Angelou who had this huge like — we only — and especially when she's whitewashed, we only like to think of her as this eloquent poet and writer and speaker and sort of this ancestral elder energy. She did some things, if you've read her books. Maya Angelou? Are you sure.

Candice: **[inaudible 00:40:16]** that night, but just not written, I couldn't even communicate because word had got to my management team first that this person was like really ferocious, they e-mailed all the brands I worked with and were like how could you work with someone like this and I was angry with myself because I've

been telling my management team for a while that I wanted to lead with this story for a good sequence, and everyone around me was like, no, no, no, it's fine, it's fine, and I was —

Layla: You were ready to own your truth, right.

Candice: I was furious because I was like how could we let someone get out the gate before us like, I was so mad. But when I, again, in retrospect, I'm like it happened the way it was meant to happen —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — because even though I felt loved and I feel loved, there were still some things that the world are not ready to let black women get away with on their time.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: And the world might not have been so gracious —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — if I were like, guys, I've got this thing to tell you —

Layla: Right.

Candice: But the combination of being a black, dark-skinned woman who had this invisible noose around her neck —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — that, I can't be sure, but I'm more than likely it was a white person —

Layla: Salacious, right.

Candice: The combination of those things? And every one of all races be like no, no, no, no, no.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And the public consensus was you get to tell your story.

Layla: That's right. That was what I felt, like you can't shame me for my story, you know?

Candice: I've literally been dragged into the light naked by someone else —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — up until this day who I don't know.



Layla: Right. And it speaks to — and, again, I mean, people will say, oh, it's just, you know, something wrong with her, but, honestly, as an outsider looking in, you can see it for what it is which is this black woman, bold, money-making, really industry changing, being uplifted, elevated, elevating herself and those who are left behind, instead of saying she inspires me, say, "Who is she? Who does she get — why does she get to be like that?" And there's another quote in your book and you said, "My own experiences and those of black women I know mean that we have a first-class degree in making ourselves small."

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Before you even arrive in the venue, you're overthinking your clothes not because of how you feel about them —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — but the thoughts are gonna be, oh, what cadence in my voice should I use today? There are some words I need to leave at the door because they could be perceived as too ghetto —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — before you've even left your house.

Layla: Right.

Candice: You're talking yourself up whilst also talking yourself in —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — well if I say that, oh, I don't want them to think I've got ahead of myself. And it's just this constant song in my head —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and only now, and I'm not even **[inaudible 00:43:31]** I'm not even a quarter of the way through —

Layla: That's right.

Candice: — my life's journey.

Layla: Right.

Candice: But only now I'm like, oh, let's change this song. This is terrible music and I'm only playing it for someone else and I cannot afford my children to hear this song.

Layla: Yeah. Let's talk about this, 'cause like I said, I'm just about to read this chapter on Esmé and I've just had a conversation last week with my friend, Monique Melton who's an anti-racist educator, but also a mother. Her children had experiences of racism at school. I don't think there's anybody who hasn't. There are certain things that we have to brace ourselves for that we know that our children are gonna have to experience the first time and we can't protect them from what happens at school, on the playground. Something they even just see on the TV or on the internet, but there are certain things that we can instill into their mind about their self-worth. What are some of those things that you're doing? I know Esmé is, what, six? But she's very — I watched an interview and you said at four, you had to tell her about periods because she found your tampons and she needed to know. "Momma, do you wear a nappy? What is this?"

Candice: She's very bright. She knows when you're trying to bluff so I don't bluff.

Layla: Right.

Candice: With Esmé, my parenting style is very I'm gonna be before I say it. I was told a lot growing up but never necessarily got to see it in action and so even though I like wearing my head this short, it's part of my parenting journey. It's part of a tactic. I do not mind if Esmé grows up and she's 20, 25, and wants to wear some Remy weave to her backside, but let it be known that you are always around a mum who you saw celebrate her natural hair.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Who you saw celebrate herself in her most natural form.

Layla: Right.

Candice: So, when I see you experimenting, I in my heart am gonna know that's all it is.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: It couldn't possibly come from a place of feeling like you're not worthy —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — or you didn't see black beauty be celebrated because that's always in this house all the time.

Layla: That's all you're gonna see all the time, right.

Candice: That's all you see. I don't mind her library being varied but I'm very insistent about books where dark-skinned black kids are the main character.

Layla: That's right.

Candice: I need that. I don't mind her toys being varied but I go through hell and high water sourcing black dolls with natural hairstyles. These things cost an arm and a leg but I feel like they're worth it because I'm up against Disney and Netflix and YouTube and the playground and, you know —

Layla: And even when, I mean, 'cause let's talk about colorism, even when there are characters on the TV or dolls, they're the light-skinned versions of blackness and not the dark-skinned version and — Yeah.

Candice: I'm also aware, and I don't speak about it much but of course I'm aware of it. I'm aware that Esmé's lighter and I'm already trying to position myself for a conversation about colorism where it's understanding that she profits from that diagram —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and I don't wanna appear in that moment to be the aggressor.

Layla: That's right.

Candice: But I need her to understand that, baby, there is something that's been in place and will be in place that actually says that just because of your skin tone, you're made to feel more beautiful than me, your own mum.

Layla: Right.

Candice: We need to have a conversation about this.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And that's weird. That's strange.

Layla: Yes, and I'm sure because for her you're just mum.

Candice: I'm just mum.

Layla: Right? She's not noticing different like hues of blackness.

Candice: Yes.

Layla: Is she — Okay.

Candice: **[inaudible 00:47:35]** was really warm and we were in the garden and the sun danced on her skin and she said, "Mum, don't wake me. I need to wake up as dark as you." I was like —

Layla: She notices.

Candice: She notices.

Layla: Right, right. She hasn't yet made a meaning out of it other than there's difference, right.

Candice: Exactly.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And so I'm already like, right, there's a conversation that needs to happen there. Her cousin, my niece, is my skin tone but has less kinks in her hair.

Layla: Right, yeah.

Candice: So, Esmé's like, oh, mum. I don't know what word to use but my looks feel really rough —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and Nikki's hair feels really smooth.

Layla: Right.

Candice: It's like —

Layla: She's trying to make sense of it, yeah.

Candice: All of it.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: And all I can do is tell the truth and prepare for the world trying to lie.

Layla: Right. And this is so important about preparing them before they go and find the story out there. That is not empowering to her and that could put her in a position where she causes harm —

Candice: Exactly.

Layla: — to somebody else, right? I mean, we've had it when you're talking about hair, my hair is completely different to Maya's hair, my daughter, because we are mixed African and Arab but my husband is more — his family seems to have more Arab genes than African so they have straighter hair and so she has sort of what you call type 3 maybe, sort of twirly hair and people always go, "Oh, it's so pretty, how do you do it like that?" and I have type 4, all different types of type 4 all over

my head, right, very kinky, coily hair and what's interesting though is, especially when I stopped wearing the hijab and started wearing my hair natural, shaved it off and then grew it natural, she's always been, "I wish I had your hair."

Candice: See?

Layla: Yeah, you see? And I'm like that's so interesting because the world is gonna tell you your hair is more beautiful than my hair, but she's like, "No, your hair grows like this." She sees a crown and I'm always like, look at the curls, we're puffing today, right? And she's just like I've just got these limp, you know, these limp hair falling down.

Candice: And I don't think for both of us they won't understand how we're having mums like this is.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: It's still rare.

Layla: Yes, yes.

Candice: No matter what country or continent you come from, as black women, this energy is still rare.

Layla: Oh, absolutely. I mean, in our culture, having my hair is no, because there's a lot of internalized racism. We're mixed Arab-African and there's a history of enslavement like that is a part of that story and seeing the African side is lesser than. So if you have hair that looks like mine, you're more African which is not a good thing.

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Right? And so you're absolutely right. It doesn't matter where in the world you are. Anti-blackness is a global phenomenon.

Candice: Yeah. 'Cause you touched on this briefly. Esmé specifically has been sent here to teach me some things. And I have to allow that to happen. Privately and publicly, because in the house I grew up in, aside from my granddad, it was very kids should be seen and not heard, and you don't have an opinion and your ideas aren't valid —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and Esmé came into my life at a time when I fully needed to be cracked wide open.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Many of my Caribbean friends will be like, “Oh, you’re raising her very —” They say white —

Layla: Very free. “White” is the word, right.

Candice: **[inaudible 00:51:31]** I’m like no because I have been the damaged teenager —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — because I didn’t get to have that. I didn’t get to have honest conversations with my mum or my grandmother —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and I had not passed that down to her.

Layla: I love that you brought this up though, around your friends basically wanting — saying you’re raising her white but not wanting to say the word “white” and I think there is a meaning behind that which is she has the sense of entitlement perhaps, she’s free to speak her mind however she chooses and you would not try and squash that down, make it small, or tell her to be quiet. Why is it that only white people get to have that? We’re talking about we don’t wanna live in a world where we’re treated as lesser than. My children should be able to — yeah, there should be respect but, at the same time, how can I complain about something a white kid does but not give my kid the freedom to fully be themselves?

Candice: Exactly.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Like you always say, in all of her humanity, which is not always cute.

Layla: No.

Candice: It’s not cute to go back and forth with a kid in Tesco’s about why they can’t have Lucky Charms or whatever.

Layla: Right.

Candice: But I’m like, okay, I’m gonna take the timeout to walk you through this —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — and we’re gonna have a conversation and I think one of my big yes moments were my father-in-law was here, Nigerian, very Nigerian, he was eating dinner in the living room and he called Esmé to come and collect his plate.

Layla: Okay. And you were, you heard me, nonny, nonny.

Candice: And all my sirens went off —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — and Esmé was like, “Granddad, I’m not doing that.”

Layla: Wow.

Candice: And it worked, and it still to this day like a really big moment for me and in our house because she went back and forth with him, she was like, “Granddad, I love you but your legs aren’t broken,” so let’s talk about what’s happening here. He literally had smoke coming out of his head. He was like, **[inaudible 00:53:49]** for this small girl like. And then to make it even more layered, Bodé comes along and takes the plate. And I was just sitting in the kitchen just doing a dance of joy.

Layla: Right.

Candice: That had to happen. That had to happen —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — because it’s not lack of respect because two weeks later, he went home and I finished eating in front of the TV and without even noticing it, she’s like, “Mum, you’re done with your plate? Do you want me to take that?” It’s not lack of respect.

Layla: No, no.

Candice: It’s just that already at six she was like, oh, that doesn’t feel good to me —

Layla: Right, right, and instilling that sense of what feels good and critical thinking, like — why? Why do I have to?

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: You can walk, you’re not unwell, right.

Candice: You can walk.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And so, for me, like that is a perfect example of what I’m trying to do and I know that it’s not to every black household’s taste. I understand that.

Layla: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. I mean, I know with my mum who she — my mum cracks me up. So my mum is retired from her career but works — I always tell her like she is like an empress. Like she runs an international empire of various businesses

around the world but does so from her home but is very much so a like a grandmother grandmother, right? And so, "Yeah, have the kids every day, it's no problem with me, all is fine." So she's been taking them during this pandemic 'cause they don't live very far from us which is such a godsend for me 'cause otherwise I wouldn't get any work done, but I try to get her to share some of the homeschooling with Mohammed, my youngest, he's five, and so the first day I did part of it with him at home and then I said, I'm just sending you these sheets which he just has to fill out and that's it. She called me that afternoon and said do not send me any of these things again because I'm very African in the way that I teach and he is like very Western in his way of — so he's like, Bibi, which is grandmother in Swahili, "Bibi, you don't know, that's not the way we're supposed to do it," and she's thinking, "Back when I was teaching your mum, right, and when I was learning, this is the way it is," and there's Maya who's watching and she's kind of the peacemaker, she's a Libra, so she's very much a peacemaker, Mohammed is very much a Gemini, and he's like, "You're not the boss of me," to my mum. And Maya's there like, "Mohammed, that's momma's mom," right, and he's like, "I'm gonna tell my mom," and she's like, "That's momma's mom. You can't tell on momma's mom, okay?" Clash of cultures. He came that day and he's like that, "Momma, I don't like the school of Bibi, no. Thumbs down. Thumbs down. Don't make me go again."

Candice: In that moment to know they had their say.

Layla: Yeah. He's like, no, this isn't working for me. So we can do the homework at home with you. You get the way that I like to learn. Right? He's like, "She's asking me questions that aren't even on the thing, you know?"

Candice: I love it. That Esmé's energy, but Esme would be looking at you like I don't see that question here, like...

Layla: So we're all in different stages and its different generations as well but, you know, when we talk about the idea of being a good ancestor, for me, it really does start in my relationship with my children and then what gets passed down along the lines based on the healing that I choose to do in this lifetime and that I have the privilege to do in this lifetime because the past healing that people who have come before me have done. There are certain things that I really hope and I pray that my children, my children's children, don't have in their consciousness and their understanding of themselves or of other black people in the world based on the healing that we're doing now.

Candice: Amen.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, so we talked about Esmé. I wanna talk a little bit about RJ —

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: — before we wrap up our conversation, so RJ's your son.



Candice: Yes.

Layla: Baby boy who is your spitting image, like when I saw his picture the other day, I'm like what is she talking about he looks like his dad? He is her copy paste. He's you.

Candice: That boy. Ughh, that boy.

Layla: Yeah, and you write about — you write about, in your book, that a key decision that you made was moving out of London because you were having a baby boy, a black baby boy.

Candice: Yeah. I love London with all my heart, specifically South London and Brixton and I know the pandemic's happening and the corona's happening but the pandemic for me before that was the culture of youth stabbing in London and people would say that I'm fascinated with things that are usually morbid, and I am. Before he was even in my womb, I kept a very close eye on the growing trend of gang culture and specifically stabbing and I was always racking my brain about the why and the how and how could this be stopped, and I think I became even more engrossed in it because my brother is 14 years younger than me so —

Layla: Right. You're very much a second mother to both your siblings, right?

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Both of them. **[inaudible 00:59:30]** he's 18 now so he's in prime position for so much of the violence happening in London and there's a chapter in the book called "Young, Gifted, and Stabbed" —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — and I sat through 19 hours of footage of black children just hacking each other to death. Such deep traumatic work that there was oftentimes Bodé, Papa B, would pull me away from the computer and be like, "Yeah, we're not doing that tonight —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — waking up screaming," so I'm not having —

Layla: 'Cause you wrote about things that I didn't even know were trends or things that are happening and especially in the age of social media.

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: It's an actual — gang culture is an actual game to them. A game that has a scoreboard and a chart and leaderboards and you're scored on where you stabbed people and how badly you can mutilate them. Like it's such an underworld in my consciousness.

Layla: Right.

Candice: But I sat through funeral footage and footage of mums going into morgues crying over their sons and I was like I'm not doing that. Whatever it takes to ensure that I am not crying over RJ's lifeless 14-, 15-, 16-year-old body —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — we're doing it now and leaving London had always been a conversation between us as a couple but I did not feel that urgency until I knew I was having a boy.

Layla: Right.

Candice: I was like, oh, we're going now and we got ourselves in debt for that move because whenever I speak about black people specifically leaving London, I have to honor my privilege in that moment.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Leaving London's a privilege. Leaving the city where you've got extended family and that idea of support is a privilege and there are many people who are stuck on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor of a horrendous situation who want to go who can't —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — so I can't like get on my white horse and be like, oh, I'm out of here. No. Privilege. Even taking on the debt. We literally used like a loan shark to fund our move at that time.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Utter privilege.

Layla: But utter urgency as well, like that sense of urgency that you would put yourself in that position as well because you didn't just have the money available, right? You had to leverage these different means. It was so urgent for you.

Candice: Yes.

Layla: That it couldn't wait.

Candice: No. Always never — it's so funny. I'm a born and raised Londoner. RJ's never been on a red bus. He's never been on a bus.

Layla: Right.

Candice: He's never been on a bus.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And my mum still lives in **[inaudible 01:02:22]** and my sister still lives in Brixton and when he's in these environments, his little body swivels, you know? He's just — the sense, it's just so much for him.

Layla: Yeah. That's what it's like for me in London. I grew up in Cardiff and then in Swindon, right? So — and I had cousins who were in London who were younger than me but a lot more street smart than me. So me and London every time it's just like, it's sort of like this because I just was so sheltered that I didn't have those experiences. They had to grow up very young like very quickly.

Candice: And this is it. And now, when I go back into London for work, I am so on my guard I laugh at myself.

Layla: Right, like you weren't there before, you have never been.

Candice: I love certain watches and the minute I get off the train, my watch is off, it's in my bag. It's immediately zipped up. If you're wearing a backpack, could you put it in your front and my sister's like who are you —

Layla: Right.

Candice: I don't like this, but even though she laughs at me, my heart breaks for her because I think I've said this to you before, a 16-year-old was stabbed outside my sister's house and my 4-year-old niece had to hop over a body bag to go to school and when I spoke to my sister about that, her blasé like — this is the only chapter I well up about. Her blasé-ness about it —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — she was like, "Sis, it's life." And I'm just like, "Whose life is that?"

Layla: Right.

Candice: Whose life is that?

Layla: Right. Because you can't imagine Esmé or RJ and how they're processing something like that, right. Right.

Candice: And you know my niece asks her, “Mummy, is the person under there dead?” You’re four. This should not be what you’re ingesting on the way to school.

Layla: Right.

Candice: In London, especially the gap between the rich and the poor —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — or those we perceive as rich and not see the poor is now so wide, you know, people will refer to their areas as a little bit stabby.

Layla: Right. And let’s talk about — because something that we see in the media a lot is, oh, blacks just like killing each other, right? This is black on black crime and it’s just a thing that black people do and it has no context of the impact of racism and poverty, right, in creating situations like this. Give us the wider picture.

Candice: So, in Brixton, my hometown, there is like a market and I didn’t even know this ’til I started doing research. That market was acquired in 2018 for £37.3 million. The school, the local high school in Brixton that same year had the highest number of black boys being expelled from school permanently.

Layla: Wow.

Candice: The fish market has been acquired for over 30 million and these children are being pushed out of the school system because that’s what it is.

Layla: Right.

Candice: It always comes with a layer of, “Oh, he didn’t listen —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — too hyperactive, all of that —

Layla: Right, the adultification, right, which I write about in *Me and White Supremacy*. The adultification of black children —

Candice: Children.

Layla: They’re seen as older than their age, less innocent, are punished at higher rates, given less support, right.

Candice: And so when I saw that on paper, I was like, and then in 2018, the youngest stab victim was 14 and to see the way white people specifically spoke about this child online —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — well, that's what you get. What does a 14-year-old get? A 14-year-old was stabbed 17 times. What does a 14-year-old get? Please enlighten me as you then go to your oyster and champagne bar in the middle of Brixton while he was probably on his way to a pupil referral unit.

Layla: Right.

Candice: Please tell me what they get, because Brixton specifically is an area that none of you wanted to frequent back in the day.

Layla: That's right. I mean, when I hear like certain areas in London that, you know, I've never lived there but I'm like, oh, I know what the reputation of that place was before and I know who was the majority of the people living there now and I go there now and I'm like what's happening here? This doesn't match up with what I thought this place would look like, yeah, or who I thought would be the majority of the people here. Right.

Candice: And because, you know, it's all a loop because black people don't have that financial education or that financial support, those of us who did set up businesses in Brixton didn't know how to protect them —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — we're not protected.

Layla: Right.

Candice: When someone comes and buys this lane for 30 million, we're out of there —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — with nothing. No savings, no protection —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — and there are these 70-year-old black people who are having to start again and you would know this. If you're gonna write a book on this magnitude. I was like, oh, I have to tighten up the fortress because I can't afford for it to just be written off as hearsay —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — or how I feel.

Layla: That's right. That's right. No, you gotta bring the receipts, the facts, the research, everything. I'm not just imagining it, right?

Candice: Yeah.

Layla: And also I'm thinking about how for so many of us, we're only second or third, maybe fourth generation, so when we think about like what I was saying earlier, building that multigenerational wealth or at least a multigenerational cushion, that means that there are certain things, certain choices that you're going to be able to make, right? So I think about my parents moving to the UK from East Africa, meeting there. They worked so hard to make sure that my brothers and I had the things that we had and it's so interesting when I have conversations with my younger brother because he grew up very differently than I did. I grew up more in the UK than he did but he's lived more in the UK in his adult life than I have. So he is reading my book and he's just like, "I don't remember these things," and I'm like, "Yeah, because by the time it got to you," you know what I mean? This was a different experience that you were having, you know? And he's like, "But I feel like we do have white privilege." I'm like, no, no, no, no, we have class privilege, economic privilege, but not because our parents inherited it from somewhere but because they worked their asses off in the face of systemic institutional racism that says they shouldn't have had it, right? So when I think about being a good ancestor, money is a part of that because it gives choices. It gives access. It gives the possibilities to be able to choose how you want to live your life instead of being funneled into a story, a narrative, that dominant culture creates for us.

Candice: Completely. And this white Christian idea of, you know, money being the root of all evil and all that jazz, I'm like, I need my people to get hip to these lies —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — because money has been very helpful in me now protecting my family.

Layla: That's right.

Candice: And I want that for everyone, but more to the point, I really want that for those who look like me.

Layla: Right. That's right.

Candice: Because we've not yet had the chance to relax in the freedom that that brings.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: And we deserve that. You deserve it and that's the constant conversation I have with black women. I'm like, you deserve this. And don't do that thing where you're like, "Oh, yeah, but I didn't really work hard that day." No, no —

Layla: The impostor syndrome.

Candice: All you have been through in your ancestor's network, you don't understand how in the red this universe is to you.

Layla: That's right.

Candice: So right now, get the heebie jeebies when you're getting paid really well and in your mind you're like, "I did not find that hard."

Layla: Right.

Candice: Stop **[inaudible 01:10:58]**

Layla: That's such a story, right? That is such a story that so many of us have that if it came too easy, it must not be mine, right? If it came too easy, I must not really deserve it and we have to cut that shit out.

Candice: The struggle —

Layla: And it didn't come easy, that's the thing. It didn't come easy.

Candice: I tell my friends all the time, I'm like, hey, you think I'm making money now. The universe has not caught up with what it owes me yet.

Layla: Right.

Candice: So there will be days when it feels like making this money is easy, and so it damn should be.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: Aren't you tired of **[inaudible 01:11:40]** even mentally —

Layla: Yeah, yeah. And that stereotype and that archetype of the strong black woman who is always toiling and getting very little in return, one of the things that you talked about in your book is the pyramid structure. Yeah, walk us through what that pyramid is.

Candice: You know, I don't even know how that pyramid came to mind and I just drew it out one day but in my mind, I see the world as a pyramid and at the very top of the pyramid, a white man, and, you know, it goes down as we know it does, what I always tell people, I don't even see black women on the pyramid.

Layla: And that was the part that got me, right. So you said white men, white women, other people of color, black man, okay, where are black women, I was like on the base and you were like, no, not on the base, right. Where are they?

Candice: Like in my mind, black women are the pillars holding this pyramid up —

Layla: Right.

Candice: — who don't even get to come above soil. You don't even see us on the base.

Layla: Right.

Candice: And so when I talk to black women and I'm like hon, believe, get your money up, do this, do that, it's because I want you to come up for air.

Layla: That's right.

Candice: This living beneath the ground, you're gonna get an eternity to do that once you're dead. I don't wanna talk about that right now.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: We're trying to get on this pyramid —

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: — and when you even start to like taste the air and the food and the climate, you're gonna wanna keep climbing. Because being underground whilst breathing sucks.

Layla: Right.

Candice: It sucks.

Layla: It's slow dying, yeah.

Candice: Yeah. You know how this conversation just energizes me —

Layla: I do, yes.

Candice: — because especially as a dark-skinned black woman, I'm like if I can reap from changing my own mindset, oh come on now, girls. Like —

Layla: Yeah, and that's what it is, is that you give me permission when I see you shining, when I see you making deals, rocking the brands. I mean, everything. I'm just like it's a reminder to me, that's on you too, you deserve that too, all of us deserve that. Thank you, Candice, for being an example of what it looks like to own that, the physical stuff. That physical stuff doesn't own you, first of all, and that the physical has come out clearly as a physical manifestation of the center that you're holding within.

Candice: Completely.

Layla: Right.



Candice: And this isn't to say, oh, girl, I've got so much work to do.

Layla: And it's a lifelong journey, right, because you're just getting started, as I am. We're just getting started, and there are so many things that I'll come back to and I'm like, dammit, I thought I worked that out, I thought I — where did that come from? Right.

Candice: As your deals get bigger, as your dreams get bigger, the nervousness, the palpitations go up and we're like okay, we gotta talk that impostor syndrome down, then we have to work through why I'm feeling uncomfortable about this —

Layla: Right, yeah.

Candice: — oh, God, he's in the doorway again, oh, girl, but you said you were worthy, so —

Layla: So just take it, like what's — I just wanna thank you. This conversation has been so beautiful and it filled me up so much and I knew it would do. I love you and I respect you so much for the way that you hold yourself in the world. For the legacy that you're creating for your children, your family. Your children's children's children, but also for all of us black women and black people and all people around the world because of the way that you hold yourself and the work that you do within yourself. I really, really just wanna say thank you for being you and I'm so grateful for you.

Candice: You're gonna make me cry. I can cry. She does it on purpose, people.

Layla: No, thank you so much.

Candice: Thank you. This has been amazing and it's — I've said it probably to you already but it's been very interesting to have conversations with black women and white women about this book. Very interesting. And it is for everyone but first and foremost it's for the culture.

Layla: Yes.

Candice: Conversations I have with my sisters are very different because we're reading these things and it's calling out things in us.

Layla: Yes, yeah.

Candice: And I'm like —

Layla: That's it, that's it. And what I got from your book, one of the things, one of the many things that I got from your book is the reminder that black women are not a monolith and that we get to define our own selves as individual black women

while also being connected to each other in our shared experiences and that was — yeah. That was a gift in itself.

Candice: Thank you.

Layla: Okay. Candice, our final question for you. What does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?

Candice: You know, I will know once I am on the other plane because I will know I've cracked it if I'm called upon.

Layla: Oh, yes.

Candice: If someone on this earthly plane as we know it calls upon me, that's when I know I've done it because I can't like, there are some ancestors I don't know, I'm like you're good, it's fine.

Layla: Right.

Candice: **[inaudible 01:17:25]** it is fine.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: If I have the privilege of being asked to assist my grandchildren, my great grandchildren, my own children for its time, I'm just gonna be up there in there like you go, you did it, because people trust in you even when they can't see you. You know, I don't wanna be blasphemous but that high energy, that is them believing in me even when I'm not there.

Layla: I've never heard it put that way and I'm literally gonna store that in my brain, lock it away. I got chills hearing that answer because one of the ancestors who comes to me again and again is my maternal grandmother and she is an energy that I call upon and I never thought about it that way, of it's not just about how I'm remembered for the things that I've done but if people in their moment of, you know what, I need ancestor Layla, like I need her energy, I need her guidance in this moment, I need her example, that's huge. Thank you.

Candice: No, you're welcome.

Layla: Yeah.

Candice: I didn't even know I was gonna say that but that's genuinely how I feel.

Layla: That's literally made me sit up straighter.

Candice: Yeah. The testament of our work is when we're not here to back it up.

Layla: Yeah. Beautiful. Thank you.

Candice: Thank you so much, Layla. Thank you. This was marvelous.

Layla: This is Layla Saad and you've been listening to Good Ancestor Podcast. I hope this episode has helped you find deeper answers on what being a good ancestor means to you. We'd love to have you join the Good Ancestor podcast family over on Patreon where subscribers get early access to new episodes, Patreon-only content and discussions, and special bonuses. Join us now at [Patreon.com/GoodAncestorPodcast](https://Patreon.com/GoodAncestorPodcast). Thank you for listening and thank you for being a Good Ancestor.