

Layla Saad: Hello and welcome back to the third episode of Good Ancestor podcast. Today I'm here with Ebony Janice Moore, someone I'm very excited to speak to. Someone who I've had the pleasure of being interviewed by and so I know this is going to be a really fire and really, um, moving conversation. Ebony Janice is a hip hop womanist, a scholar, and an activist doing community organizing work, most specifically around Black women's body ownership as a justice issue. We'll be speaking about that in today's conversation. She is the founder of Black Girl Mixtape, which is a multi-platform lecture series created to center and celebrate the intellectual authority of Black women. She founded BGM institute, Black Girl Mixtape Institute, an online school, offering classes that center people of color doing the work of decolonizing education and offering coaching and consulting that is decolonizing authority. Welcome to the podcast Ebony Janie.

Ebony Janice: Thank you for having me. I want you to introduce me in everything!

Layla: Welcome. I'm really, um, I'm really looking, as I said before we hit record, I'm really looking forward to having this conversation with you. You're really unique in the conversation that you are cultivating. Um, and so I am looking forward to what's going to come through today because I know that when I've listened to your sermons it really moves me and it always, um, it's always something I need to hear to remind me of my own power.

Ebony: Hmm. Mmm, hmm.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah. So let's, let's dive in with the very first question, Ebony Janice. Who are some of the ancestors, living or transitioned, familial or societal, who have influenced you on your journey?

Ebony: Okay. That would be number one my Grandmother, Maya Angelou, Erica Badu, Beyonce. So I go in that order because my grandmother is the most influential just in general, in my living in my, my grandmother transitioned December of 2015. And a really interesting story is I actually was just on a journey of truly acknowledging my ancestors both living and those that are my contemporaries at the time. And so I was doing a meditation, a recapitulation meditation, and my grandmother visited me, she was still living at the time, my grandmother visited me in these meditations and just gave a profound word to me. And then 10 days later she transitioned to the eternal and, but at the time, the people that I was calling to in this meditation was my grandmother, Maya Angelou, Erica Badu and Beyonce. And so it's just so profound to me that I was just, even in that place where I could receive that from my grandmother, which is, I believe the reason why she visited me in the spirit because who else in my super Christian family was she going to come and, you know, give this kind of message to that was for me, but also has been very profound for her six daughters and for other, other people in my family. And um, so yeah, my grandmother. And then Maya Angelou for I feel like obvious reasons, but ever since I was a little girl had this voice that I hated when I was a little girl, I thought I sounded like Peter Brady going through puberty. And there was this woman that used to tell me all the time, no, you have to love your voice. Both like the literal

manifestation, like your physical, you know, that, that voice. But also like the voice that is coming from inside of you. And she always used to call me Maya Angelou. The funny thing is though, now she calls me, she, I think she's just getting older and so she can't remember what she's saying, so she calls me, she calls me Maya D'Angelo--which I'll accept that too. That makes sense to me too. So Maya Angelou for a lot of reasons. And then Erika Badu because she's like the original carefree Black girl for us--

Layla: Hmm.

Ebony: For, for so many of us. And um, I feel like there's really no, no representation of what it looked like to, um, be very different, very unique, but still having these very, um, across the diaspora like Black girl experiences that so many of us can just feel, you know, aligned with and then Beyonce for obvious reasons. I ain't even about to say why Beyonce, because I just feel like--

Layla: I mean...

Ebony: That's a full, that's a full sentence.

Layla: I mean you know. That is a full sentence.

Ebony: Yeh. And Beyonce. Period. End of sentence.

Layla: Period right?

Ebony: Yeh.

Layla: And I love, I love these ancestors and as we're recording, both of us are wearing, um, a, uh, what do you call it? A T--, not a T-shirt. A.

Ebony: Yeah. It's a long sleeve tee shirt.

Layla: A long sleeve, sorry yeh, a long sleeve T shirt that you designed, which I saw and I was like, I need to have it.

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: And it says, "What Would Erika Badu?"

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: And I like whenever I wear it, I feel so fly.

Speaker 2: Yes. This is my, my nephew's always asking me what would Erika Badu? And so I'm, I'm constantly, um, I feel like answering that question for, for other people

and for myself, like what do I think Erica Badu. And, and even even when Erica Badu would do something that I wouldn't necessarily do---

Layla: Hmm.

Ebony: I still feel like there is a lesson in that, you know, there's a lesson in that living. Right, I'll give one example, Eric Badu has said some things that I just don't agree with--

Layla: Hmm.

Ebony: You know that like her, her relationship with R. Kelly, which is, is you know very problematic. I don't agree with it. I don't think that every single thing that she does is the right thing or you know, says the right thing. But here's the thing that I find so interesting about the way that we are so much more willing to throw her under the bus than we are to hold R. Kelly accountable for his actions.

Layla: Okay.

Ebony: That's One, and then number two, Erica Badu and her unfortunate relationship with R. Kelly is very similar to many of our relationships with our problematic family members.

Layla: Hmm.

Ebony: And you know, that are Black men. And so it's like, I think it's this important question or conversation that we need to have in our families about how we have cousins and brothers and uncles and fathers that we still love despite the fact that they are trash. And so how do we hold them accountable without completely throwing them away and/or how do we have the hard conversations holding them accountable and also getting to the point where we decide we can't continue to be in relationship with them. And so yeah, Erica Badu for a lot of reasons, is, is one of those, um, one of those what would Erika Badu questions that isn't always like, the answer to that question isn't always I would do that too. But very often it is, I would do that too.

Layla: And, what I, you know, when I saw the t shirt and was like, you know, I have to have it, what that question means to me isn't I would make a decision that Erika Badu would make, but rather...

Ebony: Uh huh.

Layla: The way of thinking...

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: it's Erica Badu's outlook on life, which is so different to the norm...

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: and as someone who, for me, as someone who is choosing to be a self defining intentionally self-defining woman, as someone who's choosing to a trail blaze my own path, you know, she, she's a trailblazer.

Ebony: Absolutely.

Layla: Yeah.

Ebony: Absolutely. I, that is so huge because that's a part of it. So I was going through a season a couple of years ago actually when I designed this shirt before it even existed. I was thinking about this idea like what would Erika Badu? And I was going through this thing with my body and just feeling really like insecure and Erica Badu released "Window Seat" and um, you know, in the video for "Window Seat", she's walking down the street, getting undressed...

Layla: Mmm.

Ebony: And by, by the end of the video she's completely naked. And so there's, I actually got emotional watching the video because there's this revelation for me that I'd never seen a body like my body it's a very shapely body. I've never seen a body like my body on television for the purpose of anything but for sex.

Layla: Mmm.

Ebony: This very, this very sexualized shape that she had, you know, big butt, hips, slim waist and um, and I never saw a body like that on TV for anything other than, but for sex and the fact that she was owning her body and doing with her body, even at the end, being naked, you know, doing with her body what she wanted to do with her body. And the message was for something other than but for sex, I, I had these, like all these conversations that I was having with myself, particularly around, you know, just owning my own body. And I remember thinking like, like having this day of like, you know, just picking my body apart and thinking, girl, what would Erika Badu in this moment? And that was like, you know, kind of the beginning of that phrase for me. But it was also like this. Yeah, she I just can't imagine Erica Badu standing in the mirror like "and my thighs, and my butt, and my and my stomach rolls and my..."

Layla: Mmm. uh hmm.

Ebony: You know, what I'm saying. And so it was like this very liberating, um, conversation for myself, just asking the question, what would Erika Badu? and so, so many more of those, you know, those moments. It's exactly what you're saying. It's this intentionally self-defining woman really is exactly what that feels like for me. So it's not, it's not, it absolutely isn't always, like I would do exactly

what Erica Badu would do, but it definitely is like I would think, hmm, what is, what is the truth for me in this moment?

Layla: Right.

Ebony: And um, and that, that has been very empowering for me over the years.

Layla: Yeh, I mean Yes, every-- yes, to everything you just said. And you know what? Erica Badu is someone who I see as someone who is a living ancestor and will become a good ancestor once she's transitioned and, and that, and she's, she has her ministry and you have your ministry, you are a hip hop womanist. And that's when I, when we met, that's the first time I'd ever heard that term...

Ebony: Mmm, hmm. Mmm, hmm.

Layla: And I was saying to my husband, because he was asking me who are you interviewing today, and I said, oooh Ebony Janice and I said she's one of the most interesting people...

Ebony: Oh thank you.

Layla: That I know because yeah, I was like, she does this work and it's at this really different intersection than I've ever seen before. And she's bridging things that, you know, I said she's talking about theology, Christian theology, hip hop, womanism, you know, Black, Black, uh Black women's bodies, um, social justice, um, you know, it all coming to--decolonizing authority, all of it coming together and making and being things that seemingly look unconnected, but they are connected.

Ebony: Yeh.

Layla: And I love watching the connections that you make. I look at you and I'm like, she's, that is her bod--this, she's building this body of work that will become her ancestry. That IS your ancestry already, but that will...

Ebony: Wow.

Layla: certainly become your ancestry when you're gone. How, what brought you to this work and what is the legacy that you are actively creating with this work?

Ebony: Mmm, hmm. Yeah, thank you for how you set that up. I have always been doing this work. I didn't have the language for it, but I always was. Always, always, always. Even into my childhood, I, hip hop has always been--I've been, I've been teaching and preaching since I was five, six years old and um, my grandmother who you know I mentioned earlier as one of the most influential people in my life, um, my grandmother sat me down when I was a little girl and taught me how to make a lesson plan because at my church you, they had student teachers

for each level of Sunday school and so for, for the baby class, you know, I was, which that's exactly, you know, it's the baby intermediate and so on and so forth. So for the baby class I was the student teacher when I was in the baby class and my grandmother just, you know, wasn't gonna let me show up to teach without having a lesson plan, you know, like what are you going to teach? You can't just look at this booklet and read out loud. You have to have a plan. What is your, what is your goal? What do you, what is your learning objectives? Right? Like, you know, a six year old about learning objectives, and um, I remember this, you know, at that age, being excited about this special time with my grandmother and also annoyed at the same time because I want to be playing. I don't wanna be...

Layla: Right.

Ebony: You know making a lesson plan on Saturday night, you know, before Sunday school in the morning. But, that is one of the absolutely, absolutely one of the defining moments in my life because I am a teacher and I don't know if I, I mean, I mean, I'm sure that the Most High would've brought me to teaching one way or another, but my grandmother was such an influential part of me coming into my teaching at such a young age. And so when, when I think about that, when I think about what she must have known and saw in me to know that this was a part of my journey, a necessary part of my journey...

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful for that. I'm so grateful for her being unapologetic about, um, conversations that she likely had with my parents about getting me to, you know, to church and getting me to Sunday school and getting me to uh, you know, teacher's meetings and things like that. And, um, and, and I say that because there are some things that my parents didn't make me do, right? Like my grandma wanted me to be an usher. My parents knew that I didn't want to be an usher, so they didn't force me to be an usher. My grandmother wanted me to sing in the choir. My parents knew that I didn't love singing in all these extra choirs that we had and so my parents didn't make me do that. But that was one of the things that my grandmother was unapologetic about. She was not about to argue with my parents about whether or not I was gonna to teach.

Layla: Hmm.

Ebony: I'm so grateful for that because absolutely, absolutely, I asked the, um, the elders and the Eternal to help me remember this, you know, I want to go to earth to do this work in this body, in this form at this time. And my, and so they sent my grandmother in this time, in this form, in this body, you know, with her story to make sure that I got to this work.

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: You understand what I'm saying?

Layla: Yes!

Ebony: There was no way that the elders and the Eternal, the Most High was going to let me forget. So they placed my grandmother in this body, in this form, in this time, you know, with this story to make sure that I was constantly coming back to myself or, or remembering myself, literally putting my members back together.

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: So I know I asked for this. I know I did, um, because there's nothing that satisfies me more than this work, more than teaching, more than preaching, more than um finding ways to communicate what-- ultimately what it is to be a Black woman, um, in and in this godness and this, you know, in this holiness and the glory of it. And so I say all that to say I was always doing hip hop womanist work. This womanist, womanism is ultimately, you know, this is defined Alice Walker has this very expansive definition of it. And so it comes from Alice Walker's definition of it, in her, in her work, *In Search of our Mother's Gardens*. And before that she had used the term womanist to ultimately say at the very least we should be able to define ourselves. And so she, she is saying like, you know, you can't name these, you can't name us, you can't decide what we're going to call ourselves. Um, you know, at the very least we should be able to define that for ourselves. And so, and in this definition, the last part of it, she says, "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" so there's this relationship, but the emphasis is on Black women. And so understanding that there is this, um, this work that we're doing, these conversations that we're having, but what would it look like for us to center Black women? And so years later, there are these Black women studying Liberation Theology and they, they took on that, that, um, that title of womanist because at the very least, even though we're doing this Black liberation work, even though we're having these conversations within theology, even when we're having these conversations, that is centering blackness, there is this very unique place that Black women show up in the world period because we live in a, a patriarchal white supremacist society. So if you break that down, this patriarchal, that means that there is some space at the very least for Black women, or for Black men to, you know, have some form of, I'm doing quote fingers, some form of authority. Um, and then in this white supremacist society, that means that there is some space for white women to show up...

Layla: Mmm, hmm.

Ebony: And have some form of authority. So what is it for the Black woman then, you know, where does she, where does she, she has this very unique position. And then from this theological perspective, we're asking the question then, because theology from a Christian perspective, the Bible, and I say from a Christian perspective, but I would say from a religious, all religions in general, but from

this Christian perspective, we're learning the Bible from this, um, male centered, this white male centered, but this male centered perspective. And if you, if you're teaching me the Bible, which is this thing that becomes the way, the truth and the light, you know, for, you know, for the way that we're living our lives as Black Christians in the world, but, you know, especially as a Black Christian person in America, then where do I show up as a Black woman? So I want to figure out how to have all conversations centering Black women because, um, because everybody else's voice is going to be heard in one way or another. And then there will be Black women. So there's all this other wisdom and knowledge and information and experiences. And so my, simultaneously you know in defining all this simultaneously, um, I grew up with hip hop, you know. The same way that I'm gonna constantly be quoting scriptures it's not possible for me to not be quoting, you know, hip hop. I'm gonna quote Biggie, I'm gonna quote Andre 3000, Jay-Z's gonna come up 27 times in a simple conversation. It's just, it's just what it is because that's the language of my, of my, of my culture, of my generation. And so how do these two things, how are they exclusive? It's impossible for them to not go together with all the wisdom that I found in hip hop, you know, in my youth and wisdom both in like the literal and wisdom and the like, okay, that doesn't make sense.

Ebony: You know, we shouldn't be doing that. And so how do we interrogate the, this, this hip hop language in the same ways that we're inter-- that or hopefully how do we interrogate the Bible or our sacred texts, what we consider sacred texts, in the same ways that we interrogate hip hop and its authors. And so yeah, I feel like I'm in one way or another in my teaching and my preaching, I've always been doing this work. It just, I finally, um, probably within the last eight, eight or so years have gotten the language for what it is that I'm doing. And so I, I feel like there are other people that have been doing hip hop womanist work, but I don't know a lot of people who have been in relationship with with it, you know, calling it that and/or been in relationship with it in the way that I have, you know, decided to really articulate in the ways that I am.

Layla: The ways that you articulated are really unique and your passion for it is really clear. And as you were talking, I remembered, um, because we, you and I met when I ran the live Me and White Supremacy challenge...

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: In the summer of 2018 and I don't know where you came from, you were like an angel, that just just found me and were like the energy of a big sister who both in public and behind the scenes you were checking in with me constantly. You were affirming me, you were letting me know that, you know, you and a bunch of other women who I didn't even know have my back. And um, it was, it was, so, you will never know what that meant to me. That was everything for me. Um, but I remember around that time you, we had a conversation about something and use you quoted to me, I believe like you quoted Beyonce and like a Chr--, a Bible passage, both within the same conversation.

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: Um, and there was no, it was, there was, it was seamless.

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: It was completely seamless. And...

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: You know like, you know, I'm not, I'm not Christian, but I, I'm very spiritual. I'm Muslim and you know, there's a lot of crossover between the two religions, but the way that you embodied the message of both for me that the, the kind of lyrics of Beyonce with this, you know, ancient wisdom was like, it kind of blew my mind and it really centered me with that ancient wisdom. But also, okay, like I'm a woman in the 21st century.

Ebony: Yes, yes. I was having a conversation recently actually on a different podcast. This, this young woman out of 'em, Michigan. Um, her, her show is called Good Girl Radio and we, I don't even know how we got on this subject, but basically basically Beyonce in the Bible. And um, I was saying at some point I was saying I, I believe that Jesus was my way to guide and, and so I use Christ as this example. You know, this living example for me, like what would it look like for me to show up, um, in this earth today? Well, you know, Christ is a great example of that. And, but, but here's the thing, context matters because Jesus was not a Black woman in 2018. So, so there are some things that we can't be like, what would Jesus do? Which brings us back to a conversation about what would Erika Badu, or what would Beyonce do, or what would Solange, because, or what would Maya Angelou do, or you know, or what would Coretta Scott King do, right? And so it's like Jesus can't. Jesus is a great example. And, and we could do really good just following the example of Christ, but there are some contextual things that will differ.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: And so we have to be able to find something that is, um, that we, that is also sacred and that is also wisdom and that is also holy. And so that's what womanism, you know, women's theology. But womanist practice in general is saying that, um, if we look around us, Black women have always been finding other things, other texts. I'm saying text, but it doesn't have to be written, you know, but always finding something sacred, um, outside of the Bible or outside of the Quran, you know, Black women have always been finding other things that lead us and guide us. And, and, and its wisdom is for us. So The Color Purple, you know, will always be sacred for us and Lemonade, you know...

Layla: Right.

Ebony: There it's, it's, it was holy, it spoke for us. It was a testimony service for us. So how can we, how can we say no, that doesn't qualify as something that can be sacred when clearly Black women across the Diaspora watch Lemonade and there was a Hallelujah shout, or--

Layla: We cried like we're--

Ebony: Abs--, absolutely...

Layla: Our whole entire paradigm was shifted...

Ebony: Mmm, hmm. Mmm, hmm.

Layla: You know, yes.

Ebony: And it's exactly what you said. Our paradigm was shifted because what happened was we got new language for how it is to articulate what this experience is, this experience of loving, of loving each other, of loving people, of loving Black men, of loving black women, which is all a part of this womanist, Alice Walker's definition of womanism. Um, you know, love sometimes women, sometimes Black men, sometimes sexually, sometimes not sexually. And so when you have something like Lemonade be able to articulate that experience in such a deep way both in its lyrics, in its visual, then it's impossible for us to be like no, because there are times when Lemonade can speak to my spiritual religious experience deeper than Paul can...

Layla: Mmm, hmm. Mmm, hmm.

Ebony: In the Bible...

Layla: Mmm, hmm. Mmm, hmm.

Ebony: Period.

Layla: And we weren't cheated on by anyone. Right?

Ebony: Yes, yes.

Layla: And still, we're not having the experience that Beyonce had when she created this album and yet...

Ebony: Absolutely.

Layla: the depth at which it touches us.

Ebony: Absolutely. And so to, so. So that's when it becomes a justice issue to exclude Beyoncé's Lemonade from a, you know, from consideration as a holy Canon or

as holy text because why? Why is Paul Credible? Why is John Credible? Why is Abraham credible? Uh, yeah. Abraham is a perfect example because for both of our religious truth systems, Abraham is the father of those, you know, um, religions. But Abraham also was trash in many times of his life, you know, he gave his wife away basically to you know prostitution, you know, like he, he, he didn't trust God at times when you know, God was speaking clearly to him. You know what I'm saying? And so, so we can find, we don't interrogate Abraham the way that we interrogate um Beyonce, you know, we don't say, we just say, oh, well, we, we iconize him as this holy character, you know, because of our, because of our sacred texts, but we don't allow him to be a man and we don't, you know, so that's not taking away from what Abraham has, what his faith did, you know, he became the father of many nations. Of course, that's what we believe, you know, if those are our truth systems, but why, why can't we do the same thing with Beyonce, not to, not to iconize her, not to make her holy, but to say like Beyonce is out here living this, um, this very Black girl experience and has found a way to articulate, um, in her music and in her art, and in her work and in a lot of ways in her living...

Layla: Absolutely. In her, in her leadership and the way that she chooses to live her life.

Ebony: Yes. So why isn't that a guide? Not we're, we're, we're just not going to do everything that Abraham did. I'm not taking my baby up on the mountain to sacrifice, you know, I'm not, that's not gonna happen. So we can't, we can't be like, well, the literal existence of Abraham because we're not living the literal existence of Abraham, we're just not. So what does it look like when we are living many of the literal, you know, experiences of Beyonce or many of the literal experiences of, you know, who, whoever it is for us. And so we're focusing on Beyonce. But really that's not the focus of womanism. Womanism's asking us to find what that text is to find what that, what that song is, you know, a song of Solomon by Toni Morrison or um, or for you so much of Audre Lorde's work or Octavia Butler is, it's sacred text.

Layla: Absolutely sacred. And I get chills. I get chills thinking about it. And really, uh, you said something about Black women have always searched for, um, guidance outside of kind of religious texts to help us without, I'm paraphrasing, but understanding our experiences and for me, those ones that you've just, you know, I was reflecting on this time last year, I was burnt out, exhausted from whiteness. Um, and I did not know I had for the first time been faced with the question. It was after seeing Toni Morrison actually in an interview when she was talking about a defying the white gaze. And I was like, what is the white gaze? Find out what the white gaze was. Then I asked myself the question, who am I outside of the white gaze? And I didn't, I didn't know, I did not know who I was without that gaze.

Ebony: Ooo.

Layla: And it sent me into such a spin that I had to close up my website, delete all my social media apps, go on a sabbatical. Basically.

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: And I spent a month between November, December, about the space of a month in the library almost every day, reading every Black feminist texts that I could get my hands on.

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: I read Audrey Lord, I read Bell Hooks, I read, um Sonia Sanchez. I read Ntozake Shange, I read Lucille Clifton, I read Zora Neale Hurston. I read everything that I could find because I was searching for a roadmap...

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: because I felt, it was like, I've been lost at sea all of this time and I had no idea.

Ebony: Mmm, yeh.

Layla: And, and you know, you talk about decolonizing authority, which is what I really want to talk about in this conversation. Um, I, in that, through that experience, realized that there have been ancestors who have come before me who have wrestled with these same questions.

Ebony: Yeh.

Layla: They have wrestled with these questions and they have attempted to answer them in the best way that they could. And in doing so they created art and they created writ, writings and they created ministries and they created poems and they are roadmaps. They are um, uh, signs for me to find my own internal authority.

Ebony: Mmm. Mmm, hmm.

Layla: And there is something just so unique to me about the Black woman's journey...

Ebony: Yeh.

Layla: Of finding her own internal authority because nobody is giving it to us.

Ebony: What a beautiful, beautiful thing. That's the thing that um, that is so amazing to me, which has been my journey, you know, even if I didn't have the language for it, like what you just said, I didn't, I may not have had that language. But my life has always been about remembering myself, because what I believed even as a young girl with the gift of knowing and seeing things, um like literally the

supernatural, um, what some people might call prophecy, but, but just, I just always knew stuff. Even to a point, my, my grandmother's mother, my, they called her Medea, she transitioned before, before I was even alive, but I knew stuff about her that used to make my grandmother weep because she would just be like, how do you know that? Like, like, who, who are you that, you know, that. And so because I, my background is, uh, Christianity. I didn't grow up with the, the, the language of reincarnation. But I studied French so I knew this word called Deja Vu, which the translation of Deja Vu is just already you. And so as a young girl who didn't have the language, wasn't allowed the language of reincarnation, but absolutely had this word Deja Vu, which, which I understood to mean "already you," I knew that I always was me. Always. So before I was in this form, if I believe that the spirit is eternal and I believe that I'm not this body, I'm just in this body, you know I'm a spirit, just having this, you know, physical experience right now that means I always was. And so I have, I have been doing the work. This is part of my min--, my work in ministry is finding ways to tell Black Christian people, especially that we are actually God, but doing it in a way that doesn't make them feel uncomfortable because of this thing that I called the Christian Demonic Filter. And the Christian Demonic filter is this thing that was given to us actually by white people where we aren't able to like, uh, as a, as a part of like being introduced to Christianity as a result of slavery here in America. And, um, and, and I say it that way because this isn't the first time that black people have been in relationship with Christianity, but because I am my ancestors, my immediate ancestors were slaves, you know, as a, as a, you know, a Black person in America. Then that means that my introduction and my ancestors, my immediate ancestors, introduction to Christianity was as a result of slavery. And so along with that introduction to Christianity, they got this Christian Demonic Filter, which was the intentional mechanism that demonized everything about them Black.

Layla:

Yeh.

Ebony:

So their langue language, any other religious affiliations. Um, just, you know, just anything that isn't expressively spelled out in the Bible and/or expressly defined for us as a part of our traditions in western Christianity, that's demonic. And, and so, you know, literally that's, that's the way that we, we grew up calling everything demonic. Ooh, ooh that's demonic girl, you can't-- And so, but here's the gag as as Black Christian identifying people. And I actually teach this in my class, um, uh, Introduction, Introducing the African Spirit Religions and Black Spirit Themes in Beyonce's Lemonade that I'll be teaching at BGM institute starting December first, which is a conversation for later, but in this class I teach about how Southern Black Christianity is actually, um, in a, in a closer relationship with Ifa, Santeria, Candomble and Vudu than it is to Catholicism. So there's that. So we, we doing all this like, you know, this Christian Demonic Filter that tries to keep us from, um, from anything Black or anything, you know, in relationship with Blackness, um historically, but the reality is we have been unable to separate ourselves from that, but that, but back to Deja Vu. So there's already you. If the spirit is eternal, and that means that I always was. And so I, so if I always was, then what happened when I came to earth is everybody else's

story for me, just piled on top of the truth of who I am. So I'm not, I'm not having a revelation. I'm just having a remembrance. Ultimately that's it. I'm just remembering myself. And so all of this, to get back to the question that you had said for yourself as you were, you were wondering who am I outside of the white gaze? And for me it, not just, it's, it's the, the white gaze of course, because that's the dominant gaze, but more than anything is who am I outside of everybody else's story for me.

Layla: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Ebony: Because, because the white gaze has even constructed my mother's truth for me, my grandmother's truth for me, my sister's, my family, my church, my people. And so who am I outside of everybody else's gaze? Well, Ebony Janice, you were already you. And so there are these moments where I, I remember myself as who I actually am. And, so how do I, how do I, um, how do I get over, you know, the story about who I'm supposed to be. And that's where I came up with this language for real, for myself about decolonizing authority is nobody's in charge of me. Nobody. Nobody is in charge of me the Most High. In fact, um, has given me so much freedom to identify myself, define myself, um, that even, even God isn't trying to control me. And so this idea of control, like going back historically, historically African indigenous people, African people didn't have like the stories about authority and the ways that we in contemporary society have about authority. And so that's where I'm asking the question. Do you realize that that something existed before people came and created the standard, the current standard, something existed, period before you showed up on the scene. Something existed before you got here. And so this idea then that authority or who is in charge is colonized is so important because the majority of our fear, the majority of the reason why we can't create the art that we want to create, the majority of the reason why we can't come into the fullness of who we actually are is because we are underneath the, the layers, the thick, heavy layers of somebody's colonized authority. You're not even in charge. I used the, I say this and after I'll stop talking because I'll talk forever, but I, I was talking recently about how hair braiding, how in the United States, and this may be, you know, worldwide, but in the United States there are um, there are certain states that you will get fined for hair braiding because you have to get licensed to braid hair. And so that means that there is some standard that you have to go learn under. And then once you live up to that standard, then you get authorized to braid hair.

Layla: Wow.

Ebony: Who gon' authorize me to do something I created. Are you kidding me? That's number one. Number two, if there are in, in many of these spaces where you cannot braid hair unless you have been certified or authorized, there isn't even a step--there isn't even a class because it's basically saying you can't do hair period unless you've been certified. Who is teaching me?

Layla: Mmm, hmm.

Ebony: So, so in many places there isn't a class, there isn't actually a module, you know, in your learning institution for hair braiding. And then the person in charge is gon' teach me how to breathe. Are you kidding me?

Layla: When this is how we do our hair!

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: I been braiding hair before I mastered the English language, are kidding me?

Layla: Right.

Ebony: Are you even? Are you seriously kidding me? And so you will get fined for doing something that you and your ancestors made up and and so the, and then the other part of that is, let's say there is a module for hair braiding, and then I learned from, you know, Sally Sue at such and such school how to, how to braid hair. This is, you know, this is the standard I gotta, I have to actually bend down. I have to lessen myself to meet that standard because she cannot braid hair better than me, she cannot teach me. I have to unlearn. And she's telling me this is the right way to braid hair. I have to unlearn what is naturally godlike for me in this, in this skill. I had to unlearn it, to do it the way that the standard teaches me. So now let's think about all these other institutions that tell us this is the standard and realize for yourself how many spaces of learning or you know that are, that have become standardized, how many spaces of learning or being or existing you actually have to lessen your natural capacity in order to meet the standard. Are you kidding me? (Layla and Ebony Laughing)

Layla: Oh, okay. Right. Wow is all I've got to say to that I, as I was listening to you talk, I was thinking about my own journey, especially as I said over this past year, ever since asked myself that question ever since diving deep and really, as you said, trying to answer the question, who am I outside of everyone's gaze really because I grew up similarly to you, I guess in a patriarchal religion and also within the white gaze. And so there are a lot of um, um, my personal conditioning has been a lot around being the good girl, being the model minority. Um, and I'm always waiting for someone who I deem for some reason has more authority than me. And I could never, if you asked me, I could never quite pinpoint why I think they have more authority than me...

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: But for some reason I have deemed and so there was, I spent a lot of my life waiting for permission.

Ebony: Mmm, hmm. Please come give me permission to do this.

Layla: Yes, I spent a lot of my life waiting for permission and it's one of the biggest lessons I've learned and I said to you before we hit record that turning 35 has been like walking through a portal for me where that's just not coming with me anymore.

Ebony: Yes, yes.

Layla: All of that. None of that is coming through with me into 35. Um, and I, I know that sounds like, oh, okay. She's just decided she's just not going to deal with that anymore, but I've had to go through the entire journey of unconditioning myself, remembering, as you said, remembering myself, healing myself, deciding for myself, defining myself. And when I think about Black women and um, well let me not speak about Black women like we're a monolith. When I think about myself as a Black woman and my relationship with authority. And also sometimes when I witness Black women who I know and their relationships with authority, there is this waiting for someone else to say it's okay that we can do this, there is this, um, until we really stepped through and do that work and really remember and reclaim ourselves. There is this, is it okay? Is it, is it going to be okay? And then our own internalized oppression as well comes up when we see a Black woman who doesn't follow those rules...

Ebony: Yep!

Layla: Right? It triggers, it triggers us. It's like, how, how can she do that? And I don't know how to do that.

Ebony: Yeah.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: Yeh. We don't know how we don't-- I actually was saying this to someone recently that part of the reason why we get that, that something that kind of, it's envy. We haven't articulated that that's what it is. We don't know that that's what we're feeling, but it's envy.

Layla: Mmm.

Ebony: And when that comes up for us is because we don't have an actual example for what it looks like to be liberated in a contemporary society. So even just going back to Jesus, the reason why I say that Jesus has been my example and my way to God, however, there have to be, there has to be something else, there has to be, um, something contextually because for Black women we, and again, you know, you're absolutely right not to speak about Black women as a monolith, but there are some shared experiences that we're having in this very patriarchal societies that we come from. So, so for, so for so many Black women, there is not an actual messiah, there is not a, you know, an example of what would it look like to actually be liberated. So when you see these few, you know, kind

of, you know, Black women out here just like not not buying into the standard, not buying into the role that they're supposed to play, not buying into the tropes, any of the tropes that have been set aside for us to exist in and, and you and you think to yourself, wait a minute, what is this? I've never, no one ever taught me this one. No one ever showed me that one. No one ever told me that that was, you know, a possibility. And so, so yeah, it is this, um, this envy that kind of shows up because we don't, because there's something in that as beautiful but we go, we go automatically to, uh, uh that's not right. She can't do that, that's not, we haven't been given access to that, to that kind of joy, to that kind of pleasure, to that kind of freedom. And so, and so how dare she be free, how dare she be, you know, whatever that is. And so we need to have more conversations like this. We need to have more conversations where we, where we are able to even introduce ourselves to the fact that we're not a monolith. Introduce ourselves to the fact that, you know, there are, there are other Black girl experiences to be had. Introduce ourselves to that so that we can say, wait a minute, what if my individual Black girl experience hasn't even been realized yet? And I could be the one to set somebody else free into like going in that direction. You know, walking in that direction. Like the Bible says that "the earth is groaning out with labor pains, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God" and I that's one of my favorite scriptures, period, because what I realized is that the earth is in literal pain waiting for me to show up. In pain, waiting for me to show up. Now we don't realize that the earth is in pain waiting for us to show up. Layla, I was in pain waiting for you. Do you understand that?

Layla: Ebony Janice!

Ebony: I, I, I was, I was in pain waiting for you to go through that portal and decide that you weren't playing these games anymore and think of, think about that. Think about the people that when you saw it and something, something was activated inside of you and there was like a little. You got a little bit closer to your freedom and that's what it is. The earth is in literal pain, like just waiting to be activated. Like, oh, that's a thing that you can do and say, and be, and have. Oh, I want to walk in that direction. That's actually feel about Beyonce.

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: I didn't go deeper about Beyonce earlier. I would talk about Beyonce...

Layla: We could make this. I mean, this whole episode could actually be about Beyonce. I'm just trying to, I'm just trying not to sound like such a Stan but I mean, yes we are a Stan.

Ebony: That's how I feel about Beyonce. I was telling uh, somebody that does some work for me recently. It's a young girl, she's like my little sister, but she's a super Beyonce fan. You, we don't even know anything about being Beyonce fans compared to this young woman, period. And um, but I was talking to her and I was and she was like super side eyeing me because I've not seen Beychalla yet. I haven't watched it. It's, listen, it's in my, the whole thing is in my google drive

and we share this google drive. The whole thing is in there, but I can't watch it because the little clips that I've seen of it, have made me sad.

Layla: Yes. I cried through a lot of it. A lot of it.

Ebony: I can not watch it because what happened for me with that performance, um, I grew up singing, Lift Every Voice and Sing. I grew up, I grew up, you know, I told you I, I've kind of always been this, it's very Blackity, Black, but also like, you know, I, I've always been doing this hip hop womanist, you know, even before I had this language for it. And so the super, super duper Blackity Black girl inside of me has always been waiting to see that, you know, in mainstream culture and in a lot of ways what happens when I see Beyonce is I see myself for the first time.

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: And it's. And it feels very emotional for me. Like, wow, I never, I lived for all these years without this language or without a, uh, an image of it or feeling, you know, very different and unique or, you know, the inner me, you know, even even the stuff that I was saying was weird or different or unique, and then even the stuff that I wasn't able to say out loud was, you know, even more weird or different or unique and so to, to see this woman just decide like, this is really what I'm doing.

Layla: Yes!

Ebony: I'm about to be out here with these, you know, ancient kmetic, you know, visuals with this, you know, garb, with this language, you know, representing Historically Black University. Like it, it feels like too much for me, I feel like I can't even take it. And so, that's it.

Layla: Yeah. I, I didn't. I mean even now I did not have words for it. It was just sobs because it was, it is very overwhelming. Um, what I see in, in Beyonce, I mean her talent as a singer and a performer and everything aside.

Ebony: Yeah.

Layla: If it was just that, that would be enough, right?

Ebony: Yeah.

Layla: But that aside, she has made a clear decision for herself that the way she is going to show up in her artistry, in her ancestry, the legacy that she is creating, that she will be unbossed, unbought, unbothered. She will create it the way that it is brought down to her and not the way that others dictate or project at her.

Ebony: And to that, the only thing I can say is, wow.

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: That is amazing. It's, it's, I'm not calling Beyonce God, but it is godlike. The decision to show up and be who you are and to be willing to evolve and to be willing to be transparent and to be willing to, um, to, to, to perfect your craft and to, you know, to, to just be getting better and better and better is, It's amazing to me and my, my work, what, what my goal is, is to be Ebony, Janice, you have either asked this question, or gon' to ask this question about what my, what the legacy...

Layla: It was on the tip of my tongue. I want to know what is that legacy?

Ebony: That that is, it's I want to, I can, I can start immediately with my immediate. My nephews. I, I want them to have this moment in their life where they realize that Ebony Janice is there aunt in it and it is like, and they feel proud of that. I think they do already, but for really silly reasons. Like I, I was rapping one day, I have, with my Preach Ups and I did one for Busta Rhymes and I did it his verse from the Chris Brown's look at me now song. And it's, you know, anything about Busta Rhymes, Busta Rhymes raps are really, really fast.

Layla: Real fast.

Ebony: So yeah, so I can, I can do the whole thing without stumbling. And I just saw my nephew's eyes get really big, like the two younger ones, the 11 year old and the nine year old. Like, oh my God, aunty Eb just. And so or when I freestyle for them, they always like, they think they're cooler than me. They don't know that I'm Aunty Somebody, you know, like they don't know that I'm cool. So they like, they hear me free style sometimes and they're like Aunty Eb got bars, and so but, but like just on a--so that makes me feel really happy. But on a deeper level, you know, one day I want them to wake up and realize, wow, my aunt, like changed stuff. Like if there was, there was a before Ebony Janice and then there's an after Ebony Janice and, and, and I want that. So that's, so that's the immediate, like, you know, I want them to be proud of me. And um, and so that's, that's number one. But with what I'm doing with the, with the language, you know, of hip hop womanism, with what I'm doing with my Preach Ups, you know, these, these Hip Hop Bible Studies where I'm, where I'm ultimately saying, if this scripture is considered sacred text, I can literally pinpoint this lyric and show you where it's saying the exact same thing. So the, the ethics of considering one sacred and the other not and they're saying the same thing. You gotta deal with that, not me in.

Layla: Mmm, hmm.

Ebony: And that also is some colonized, you know, stuff like what makes, um, what makes Edgar Allen Poe the consummate, you know, legendary poet that we will learn about in schools forever and, and not Nayyirah Waheed. You know, like

who said, who said one is more credible than the other and, and what, and, and so that credit...

Layla: And what are those standards of credibility and where do they come from?

Ebony: That's it. That's it.. So, so, so what, what I want this is, this is part of my legacy. I want a part of my legacy to be that I contributed to tearing that down. That's, you know, like, like citing the, the politics of citation is so powerful. I want people, you know, particularly in academia, but just in general, like I want people to remember the time before Ebony Janice when you couldn't cite Two Chainz, you wouldn't think to be citing a Two Chainz lyric or interview or quote in, in a scholarly text and then then there's the time after Ebony Janice where Black thought was, was as worthy, if not the reality even more credible than, right, because

Layla: That part.

Ebony: I use this example really quick. I was, I did this presentation recently and somebody on my panel was comparing Meek Mill's theory to Mazlow's rules of hierarchy and, but before the, before the conversation could be over, we got to deal with the fact that Mazlow got that from somewhere he did not, you know, that's not, that's who we credit it to, but, but there, there are all of these Black, you know, these, these African scholars, these, these philosophers that had already created this hierarchy. And then you come in and you whitewash it and you get the credit for it. That's not a conspiracy theory. That's, you know, like read books, books, they still exist for a reason. And so, so we can find the hierarchy in all of these, you know, these, these Black philosophers, these African philosophers, we can find the way that they had already been talking about like what is important to assist, you know, to make a society be able to sustain itself that people have to have these very basic things first and then like that existed for thousands of years before this man. And then he comes along and he gets credit for it. And so we talking about a standard, yet we're talking about a standard that, you know, but the standard isn't even actually properly cited like let's if we gon' have to live up to this standard. let's properly cite the standard thing. If that's the case, right?

Layla: And that's the case. And it's, it's reminding me of something that my mentor, um, Dr. Frantonia Pollins always says to me, which is if it had value when we, when they appropriated it, then it had value when we created it.

Ebony: Mmm, hmm.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: Always did.

Layla: Right?

Ebony: Absolutely.

Layla: If you see it as value valuable when Mazlow put together, and you know, put that theory out there, then it had value when the original people put it together.

Ebony: That's the, that's the, that's what decolonizing authority is about. It's about realizing that some people, largely European people, came, showed up in a lot of different places and said, oh, look at this thing that you're doing.

Layla: "Isn't that interesting?"

Ebony: Oh, that's amazing now either kill all of you. Get rid of all of you, enslave all of you. And then now we're in charge of this. And you either can't do this, can't speak of it, can't acknowledge it and/or you got to do it like this. Wait a minute. Hold on a second. I have used, um, I have used uh hair braiding as an example. We could talk about decolonizing mindfulness, you know, because like in the United States of America likely got to get licensed to do, to teach yoga by some white people. Guys, do you know that this existed for, for like it's an ancient practice that existed before you showed up on the scene. So the fact that you got to go get permission in these United States of America to teach yoga from some white people, that doesn't, that has to like, people got to get that and I'm not saying that white people can't teach yoga, I'm just saying deal with that deal with the fact that this is a colonized practice.

Layla: And I think the thing is, is like when we say this is an ancient practice and it goes, we could similarly, we could say similarly for Native American practices that have been appropriated, and that are commodified and sold through the white gaze and to a white audience. We say these are ancient practices, but the people from that ancient culture still exists today. It's not ancient. And then now they're gone.

Ebony: Yes.

Layla: And so we have to teach it because they're no longer here. They're here, they're a huge population of the earth.

Ebony: They're here.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: That part right there. That.

Layla: Right. So that's, that's the part that I think was really important just to kind of, you know, put us in perspective, um, and I'm thinking again of myself as a Black woman and how I see authority for myself and I'm wondering if you could sort of, um, bring us home with this, with this conversation and maybe preach a

sermon or whatever moves, whatever moves through you for the women and people of Color, the Black people and Black women who need to re-- remember their own authority.

Ebony:

Yeah. The first thing that actually comes to my mind that really began to shift this journey, uh, unintentionally. Um, was I remember my pastor had preached a sermon years ago, a former pastor of mine had preach a sermon years ago about Paul had got shipwrecked. And, and when, when they got shipwrecked, Paul, Paul was actually a prisoner, but he took charge and um, no, he's, hows this prisoner, you know, taking charge, whatever. But over and over again throughout the sermon because, you know, in Black churches, that's the thing, like you just kinda repeat yo' catch phrase and that, you know, that just take people up. So, over and over again throughout the sermon, he just kept saying, who authorized you for that? Who authorized you for that? And that was really the beginning of my shift in the conversation about authority because I had never asked that question before. Who put y'all in charge? Even even actually I was in that church asking the question, wait a minute, I can't even preach unless you give me permission to preach, who authorized you to give me like, who, who put you in charge ultimately. And, and so literally I started kind of deconstructing really every area of my life where there was somebody in charge who authorized you for that, was the beginning of that, that question or that conversation. And so, and so I have given these examples, I've talked about, you know, hair braiding. I'm trying to talk about these very practical things. I talk about hair braiding, I've talked about yoga. I even, I even think about the history of, um, of medicine, how for, for many people practicing medicine is a spiritual practice, a part of their spiritual practice.

Layla:

Right.

Ebony:

So you come into a space and you say, well I understand you're talking about authority, but I don't want somebody operating on me or you know, prescribing me medicine or heal-- you know, doing healing work that hasn't been certified. Well understand that even those certification standards have been colonized because there were people, number one already healing for centuries before these standards showed up. And then number two, even many of the standards existed and the people who created those standards or, or, or, or practice you know, operated for the first time whatever did not get proper credit for the standards that they created. So it's still colonized because who puts you in charge to say unless you do it like ABCDEFG. And so I wonder for, for, for all of us, anybody listening or anybody that's interested in having this conversation on a deeper level, I wonder for all of us, if we might just begin to interrogate, like go back through our own lives and ask the question. Like where are the places where I've been waiting for permission? And let me, let me think about the history of those areas. So let's say, you know, for me it has been ministry, it has been teaching, it has been, you know, ministry, Ministry, ministry, but also preaching and then, and then teaching.

Layla: Yeh, for me it was, it was writing and it took me years to own myself as a writer even though I've written all my life.

Ebony: So, so there's, so think about those three areas. We got ministry, we got teaching, we got writing. Who, who is in charge? Who, who is, who made it up, who made up preaching, who made up teaching, who made up, who made up writing? And then, and then who made that uh, nobody did, you know, it's just a natural behavior that people began to operate in. So, so beyond that, then who are the people who most, this is a question Zan West asked me who benefits for me to wait, who benefits for me to believe it this way? Who Benefits? And the reality is...

Layla: Mmm.

Ebony: In all, in all three of those areas, white men actually benefit the most in every single thing that, that we just said. CIS, Hetero, patriarchal, white supremacy or able body literally, right? Like think about all these privileges, that's who benefits the most. It does not actually benefit me or my people for me to not open up my mouth. It does not benefit me or my people for me to not preach. It does not benefit me or my people for me to not teach. It does not benefit me or my people, for me to not write whatever those things are. So asking those questions even because yours might not be preaching, teaching or writing, whatever. But, these are the examples that were giving. Well, whatever it is that you're waiting for somebody to give you permission to do. I was talking to a client recently about the fact that she didn't want to apply for unemployment because the person that she was working for before the job ended used to always say all the time, I would never apply for unemployment. I would like that was a part of their language all the time...

Layla: Mmm.

Ebony: I was like, girl, you were being programmed. Do you realize that, that you were being programmed to not do what would be able to take care of you? What would, what would benefit you? So who does it benefit for you to abide by that idea that applying for unemployment when your job is, is a bad idea or it's not good or it means something about you. And so that's the question, like thinking about all these kinds of miscellaneous things that bringing them together, the common question I feel like really empowers us into like dealing with authority as is colonized ideology is asking the question, who actually benefits from me believing it this way? Who actually benefits from me thinking of it this way? And the last thing that I'll say about that is I've been teaching, I've been teaching it, um teaching about authority in this way about. Imagine that there's 10 steps. There aren't 10 steps, but just imagine there's 10 steps and in in this practice you're only on step three. Like you, you haven't, you're not a guru yet. You haven't. Whatever it is, if it's writing, if it's preaching, if it's teaching, if it's teaching yoga. If it's, if it's being a healer, whatever it is, you're only on step three. Guess who you are a guru to everybody on step two, one and the folk that ain't even got sense enough to start taking steps yet. And so, but uh, but

the colonized authority doesn't tell us that we have the right to teach or to share or to, or to invite people into, you know, into our space because there's two things. Number one, we believe that there's only enough room on step three for one person and that's not true.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: And that is a, that is a very white supremacist ideology is that there's not enough room. There's only, excuse me, there's only enough room here for one person or for this one particular group of people.

Layla: Especially if you're a, a person in a marginalized identity.

Ebony: Absolutely.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: Absolutely.

Layla: There can only be one token one of us and that's it.

Ebony: Oh yes. And then, and then beyond that is everybody on step two is amazed by how you got to step three. You are, you are a master teacher for step three there, there has been nobody who has got to step three that can articulate step three activation the way that you can.

Layla: Hmm.

Ebony: So that is my, my preachment, my teaching around what does it look like even in a practical way for us to decolonize authority of the, the, the colonized idea of authority says until you get to step 10, you have no credibility. You are so credible to everybody on step two, one and those that haven't begun yet.

Layla: One hundred percent. And I think another part of that colonized authority is that there is no room for not knowing.

Ebony: Mmm, hmm. Yes.

Layla: Right. So, so one of the things that I found really freeing is when I heard, I think it was an interview with Te-Nahisi Coates and he was talking about when he's asked a question and it's not in his lane, it's not in his knowledge, he's not going to act like he knows what the answer is.

Ebony: That's so good.

Layla: Right. And that's so freeing. Like, I may be an expert in this, but I'm not in that, you know, and, and it's okay for me to say, I don't know.

Ebony: That is still more of uh, more of sharing, sharing step three though, because here's the thing. We both can be, even if we're in the same field, there can be some things that I don't know still.

Layla: Yes.

Ebony: Right? Right. And here's the best part about that though, I'm in community with Layla and Layla does know that.

Layla: Mmm, hmm.

Ebony: She like, like it has an emphasis on that despite the fact that we're both in the same industry in the same field. And so I can share that space. It doesn't make me less credible. It doesn't make me less worthy. It doesn't make me less capable. It's just that, that question right there or that piece right there, Layla, Layla got that up and down and all around. She's gonna she's gonna hold you down on that. And so it doesn't make me, it doesn't lessen my capacity for me to say, I don't know. So I appreciate you bringing that up because that's so good in this colon-- in this, this colonized space of authority. It's you gotta-- do you know how many doctor's appointments I've been to where doctors have just sat there and just talked out the side of their neck. They don't know what they're talking about. Period. And, and I was diagnosed with PCOS when I was 22 years old and I had all these symptoms prior to getting a, a woman doctor. And so even when we talk about like we're talking about, you know, colonized authority and putting an emphasis on, you know, uh Blackness or for people of color kinda coming out of this space, but for all marginalized spaces. Because when I, when I think about the fact that at 22 a woman doctor looked at me, she didn't run no tests, she didn't do anything. She looked at me and said, you have PCOS. Looked at me. Just looked at me. But all of my doctors before that diagnosis were white men. Can you deal with that? Can you deal with the fact that they both went to the same schools, have the same learning, but she had a capacity as a woman to just look at me, look at my body, look at these very basic things, these outwardly symptoms and tell me, oh, there's something going on with your ovaries. So when we, when we buy into this idea that again, who does it benefit to be considered first? Who does it benefit for? You know, this group of people to be considered the most capable. Who does it benefit CIS white men. They're winning. They're out here in these streets winning because we believe it. We buy into it. And so, so yeah, this, this asking this question, who authorized you, number one, and then number two for yourself, asking yourself the question, if there's 10 steps and I'm just on step seven, does that make me less credible for everybody on step six, five, four, three, two, one. And those that are just beginning.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: And so do I have to wait for somebody to give me permission at step ten to begin this journey? And what would it look like for me to begin this journey today without somebody's permission? And so yeah, this, going back to the final

thing I'll say on that, it's just going back to that scripture that I mentioned earlier, that "the earth is groaning out with labor pains, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God." The beautiful thing about the revealing is, and that's why I say there's not 10 steps because I don't think we get to like some final actualized step.

Layla: Right.

Ebony: Even the, even the ancestors have work...

Layla: Right, right. They didn't die perfect. Right?

Ebony: Yes, there's still work happening and so and so until we transition into some higher like elder ancestral realm or something like, we're going to always be on a journey. So if you're waiting to perfect it to begin, you're the, you are. We're waiting for the revealing. This is an ongoing process. You just walk through this, you said you walked through a portal at 35, at 36 you're going to walk through another portal. At 40, you're gonna walk through another portal. At 45, you're going to walk through another portal. And so my prayer is that you never stop being willing to be revealed and not waiting for some imaginary, like this is the, I was waiting for this in order to be able to begin. No, no, no, no, no, no. Beyonce got something yet for us in store. She has, she has.

Layla: Oh, she does.

Ebony: Oh yes. I don't even know what she gonna have to do next.

Layla: I'm not even ready. I'm not ready.

Ebony: I just don't even. I can't even fathom what this woman's going to do next. But, but again, even using that as an example, somebody who we you know can, can agree for the most part, if, if you got a little bit of sense, you can agree that, that Beyonce is out here doing this very high, you know, step nine, step 10, living and, and even she has is still being revealed. We don't know. This is this what makes me a little emotional. We don't even know the best version of Beyonce yet. Here's, here's the thing, Layla, as dope as you are, as much as I love you, we don't even know the best version of you yet. And if you keep waiting for permission to show up just as where you currently are, we all are just going to remain in pain. We're grieving because we just waiting for Laila to show up right here in this space. And nobody's in charge of that. But you. Period.

Layla: Period.

Ebony: Nobody's in charge of that, but you.

Layla: Oh wow. Ebony Janice. That was, I thank you for-- you've preached a sermon. You really did preach a sermon that moved me and I know I'm going to be

reflecting on this over the next few days and really letting it settle in me because your words are really activating, you know, very, very activating. So I hope that everyone who's listening, I know everyone who's listening has had something shift or will experience something shift within, um, in their relationship with themselves first and foremost, and then how that relationship is then manifested in how they relate to the rest of the world. Um, so thank you very much. Thank you so much for this conversation.

Ebony: Thank you for having me. Thank you for the work that you're doing. I actually feel like I remember the moments of this becoming a thing, this good ancestor conversation. I feel like there was some sprinkles of it happening and I saw it coming. I saw like I saw the name change coming, I saw it. I just want you to know that and so I'm so proud of you for doing the very hard work of saying, of saying like, okay, I know that y'all were celebrating it that way, but that's not true for me. I don't wanna do that. I don't want to give away my authority to y'all to tell me how to do the work that my soul must have. So I'm about to totally shift. I'm changing my name, I'm changing, you know, I'm changing everything because this is what it is. I'm so happy that you did that because we are all better and now here's the best part about it. We have an example of what it looks like to change courses and go in the right direction. Even though the direction that you were headed looked lucrative and looked like, you know, it could be beneficial. Like we know, we have a great example of what it looks like to shift and it's, and we're better for it. So thank you so much for this work.

Layla: Thank you so much Ebony Janice. Thank you so, so much. You've been such an important part of this journey. Again, I don't think you realize that, that your words have really stayed with me, so thank you.

Ebony: Thank you.

Layla: Our very last question as we close out, what does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?

Ebony: Yeah, for me it means, um, currently in this living in this body, it means continuing to create the conversations that must have, that we must have in order for us to be whole, free, actualized people. Um, I want, I want my ancestry to be about, um, to be people. I wouldn't even say people to be God body people, um, God body beings who are just on a journey to remember themselves. Like that's the whole. Like I don't want, I don't want my nieces and nephews, I don't want my great, great grandchildren to have to be 30 before they realize, oh, I am, you know, like I, I want, I want the story to be like after her, her, her entire blood line was just full of people who were just being what God said. For real. So that's number one and then, and that, so I'm creating those conversations now. Like I feel like I'm doing that now where I'm on a mission to do that now. And then when I'm gone, that's the memory I want to visit. That's important to me because I think about my grandmother. Like I said, like I was, I was maybe the one person in my family that was available for my grandmother to visit me in the spirit, you know, and so I want to be creating

people who are available for me to visit them, you know, as an ancestor, um, or as an elder, as a contemporary, you know, to, to be able to visit them in the spirit and give guidance and wisdom and share. Like I want to be creating that space for us because for so many of us, like I said, as a result of our Christian Demonic Filter, so many of us, and I say Christina Demonic Filter, but I know that there's some version of that for other people as well outside of Christianity and so, but for so many of us we're not. We have not been available for conversations about ancestors and we have not been accomplished in a available for conversations about the spirit in this way and so it's important for me that whatever it is that I'm talking about or doing, or saying, or being is making room for that in a, in a larger way for for people to come.

Layla: That just gave me chills. Thank you so much. Ebony Janice.

Ebony: Thank you. Thank you. I love you so much. I really do. I mean it.

Layla: I love you too.