Group#2 Baddies Who Read Podcast Transcript

(0:00 - 8:49)

Welcome to Baddies Who Read. My name is Juliemarie Hernandez and I'll be your host for today's podcast. On today's episode, we have our super baddies who have dived into the Caribbean.

Like, I'm not talking about out here like the Caribbean as in the beaches, right? Because every time we talk about the Caribbean, we just think about these beautiful, gorgeous, blue, clear beaches. Not like these nasty beaches we got in New York, like, come on, Orchard Beach, y'all. Coney Island Beach, like, that's not a beach, y'all.

We're talking about today. Today, yes, today in this podcast, we will be talking about authors of the Caribbean. Now, we do not shine and we do not do a very good job of giving kudos to those who are in the Caribbean, who are doing the work, right? Who are authors, who have written, right? And so today, my beautiful sisters have dived in and they're going to be talking about different types of topics, right? So some of the topics we're going to be discussing today, right, is first off, we got to give historical memory.

Like, we got to be on the same page about the history in the Caribbean. So Ariana, our sister, is going to be leading us in that. Then we're going to dive into the family dynamics.

Now, I'm going to need y'all later on to go get y'all Kleenex. Don't worry, I'll remind you. And Shania and Bianca are going to be leading us in that segment.

And then we're going to really quickly go into colonialism and multi-generational trauma in womanhood. And I do have to give you a trigger warning because Letitia will really beautifully and delicately drive us through there. And then we're going to wrap it up really quickly with the portrayals of Black women in media and its effect on colorism.

And Grace is gracefully going to be guiding us through that and navigating us, right? But not only will be discussing these topics, right, that these beautiful ladies will be introducing us to, but we're also going to be talking about, we're also going to be talking about some of the stories and how we personally have related to these topics, right? So as we get ready and as we prepare to dive into these segments, will you help me introduce Ariana as she gives us a little bit of a refresher on our historical memory of the Caribbean. Get something straight. So Ariana, what can you tell us about the Caribbean? Now girls, remember, grab your Kleenexes and grab a friend and let's listen in.

Hey, this is Ariana Perisic and welcome to today's discussion on Afro-Caribbean families and the transmission of generational trauma. I will be looking at how Afro-Caribbean families have changed throughout time, their history, as well as specific dynamics, gender dynamics also,

what generational trauma is, and how it impacts families. Now let's get into it.
Among the Spanish, British, and French Caribbean islands during slavery and emancipation, as well as the migratory period from the 1950s to now, what makes Afro-Caribbean families different from other families? What are its distinguishing traits? Well, they are mostly characterized by being non-nuclear family structures, but that was occurring to many anthropologists in the mid-20th century. Other words used to describe the families were disorganized, fractured, and unstable. Features of the criteria for these descriptions included where parent-child bonds are above husband and wife bonds, there are illegitimate children, and extended families.

This came to be better understood and coined in 1966 by anthropologist Raymond T. Smith as matrophocality. Matrophocality is a property of the internal relations of male, as well as female headed households, wherein women in the role as mothers come to be the focus of relationships rather than head of household as such. Women are the primary economic providers and decision makers for household needs.

Conversely, the men play a role but is sometimes marginalized. There are many different explanations provided as to why there is matrophocality in Afro-Caribbean families. Some argue the structure reflects African cultural patterns that emphasize women's roles in everyday life, their economic factors such as high rates of male migration for work, male unemployment, and poverty as a constant force in shaping family structures.

Others decide to go all the way back to the Atlantic slave trade. According to Olive Senior, a writer but also sociologist, enslaved women were frequently used as sexual concubines by white slave owners, leading to the birth of mixed-race children. These children were sometimes freed or given preferential treatment, reinforcing the mother's role as the primary caregiver.

Children also inherit the legal status of their mothers, making the mother-child bond the most consistent and recognized relationship. Fathers were rarely acknowledged unless only slave owners were. Thus, men's inability to fill roles disrupted the establishment of patriarchal family structures, making women the central figures in family life.

Despite claims that matrophocality is non-normative and therefore wrong, Layne Renoud, an English academic expert in Caribbean fiction, stressed the resilience of Afro-Caribbean families, especially their reliance on matrophocality, evolved as a survival strategy. She supplements this view with Erna Broderer's concept of the fractal family tree, where non-linear, expansive networks of care beyond biological ties help sustain communities. Erna Broderer's research shows how storytelling helps reinterpret traumatic histories, transforming pain into empowerment.

Sharing family narratives builds resilience by connecting younger generations to their heritage while providing context for understanding and healing past wounds. Another feature of Afro

Caribbean families is transnationalism, explained most eloquently in Mary Chamberlain's chapter Identity and Kinship Caribbean Transnational Narratives. The Caribbean was built on waves of migration, both forced and voluntary.
Between the 17th and 19th centuries, over 15 million Africans were brought to the Caribbean as slaves, while other groups, including indentured laborers from India and China, followed in the 19th century. After emancipation, migration within the Caribbean was common, with many moving from older colonies to newer ones, like Trinidad and Guyana. Later in the 20th century, Caribbean families migrated to the U.S., the U.K., and other parts of the world, seeking better economic opportunities.

Interestingly enough, this was not looked down upon in families, since working outside the country expanded its not drastically shake of family links. Along with major focality, the practice of co-parenting, fostering, and child-shifting became essential to survival and resilience, particularly in the context of migration. Despite the physical distances, Caribbean families have maintained strong kinship networks, relying on regular communication through letters, remittances, and visits to uphold family connections.

However, unfortunately, in contemporary times, there is a phenomenon in the Caribbean transnational families known as burial children. Burial children are those whose parents leave Caribbean to seek out better economic opportunities, sending burials back filled with clothing, food, and other material items. While these burials symbolize care and provision, they often mask the emotional toll of parental absence.

Emotional impacts include abandonment, depression, and low self-esteem. Multimedia Journalist Fellow for the Center for Health Journalism, Melissa Dole, goes on further about how when families reunite, often years later, they face challenges in rebuilding trust and repairing bonds damaged by separation. She proposes the solution for other journalists in approaching families is being better equipped with knowledge to raise awareness of proper planning before migration by setting up trusting caregivers and engaging with social workers and activists to help address community interests.

As we've seen thus far, generational trauma is a problem. But what is generational trauma? Generational trauma is a transmission of trauma or its legacy in the form of a psychological consequence of an injury or attack, poverty, and so forth. From the generation experiencing trauma to subsequent generations, as defined by the American Psychological Association, the impact generational trauma can have on individuals and families is emotional distress, attachment issues, and chronic stress.

(8:50 - 10:37)

Emotional distress is when individuals may struggle with feelings of anxiety, anger, or depression without understanding the origins as the unresolved trauma from previous

generations shapes their emotional responses. Attachment issues is when trauma can impair the ability to form healthy relationships, leading to patterns of avoidance or dependency. And lastly, chronic stress is when inherited trauma often results in heightened stress responses, which can make it hard to cope with daily challenges, thus perpetuating the cycle of trauma across generations.
And now for curbing families, the process of healing often involves combination of therapy, community support, and cultural reclamation, helping families reconnect with their heritage and rebuild stronger, healthier bonds. I hope curbing families are a testament to survival, adaptation, and transformation. And while the shadows of historical trauma persist, so do the threads of resilience woven through generations.

Understanding these dynamics not only honors the past, but also empowers future generations to heal and thrive. Let's continue to explore these histories and share these stories, as they are not just about the past, but about shaping a better, more connected future. Thank you for listening.

I hope you enjoyed this topic as much as I did. Bye. Now in this segment, we will have our homegirl Shania and Bianca dive right into the family dynamics.

Now, giving ouch vibes already. I know, I know family is a really hard topic. I'll get you on with you, girl.

Well baddies, buckle up, because Shania is gonna not only touch upon these family dynamics, but remember, we are focusing on the Caribbean, so definitely gonna be hearing some crazy stories, right? Like, we already probably thinking about it. Like, I know, I know. We're gonna take a moment.

(10:38 - 11:23)

Let's, let's pause real quick. All right. Yes, you remembered it already.

I know. I bet you're already imagining the crazy story in your head, right? That's why we took a second. It's okay.

It's okay. Just finish that thought, right? Now, while our girl Shania opened us up on the topic of family dynamics with our new favorite Haitian author, Edwidge Danikart, I hope I said that right, right? Bianca is gonna put us on to a Jamaican author and poet by the name of Lorana Goddison, and I really hope I said that right. It's probably Godison.

Sorry. I'm really bad at pronunciation. Through these two authors, we are gonna see how now this tag team of Shania and Bianca, right? Because they a tag team.

(11:23 - 11:43)

They gonna tag it up. Will take us through the themes associated with mother-daughter dynamics. So my baddies, get your Kleenex or your boxing gloves out and get ready, because y'all already know this is a sore spot for many of us.

Let's get it on. Take it away, ladies. Hey, it's Bianca and Shania.

(11:44 - 18:37)
Today, we wanted to discuss the

And what is that about? It's about this girl named Sophie. Ever since she was born, she lived under the care of her aunt Addie, separated from her mother. Well, one day when Sophie was 12, her mother Martine sent a telegram to Addie saying she wanted Sophie to come and live with her.

That doesn't sound too bad. At least we know she cares about her daughter. But things aren't all light and dandy.

Sophie has to leave the only family she's ever known. She considers Addie, her mother at this point, the only real mother she's ever known. So she's not happy.

Alexia Block once did a study on other mothers and grandmothers, and in her paper, she said that when a child has been separated from their mother for so long and is left with an aunt or grandmother, they sometimes refer to them as mama and refer to their actual mother as their other mother. I wouldn't be happy either if I was forced to leave the woman that raised me to go live with a woman that I only see in pictures. Right, but she goes willingly and out of the love for her aunt Addie, she is respectful towards her mother and gives her the chance.

Martine is not what she imagined, which is a little disappointing for her and rightfully so. We can see there's something a little off with her mother when they reach their new home. Her mother has a doll, a life-size doll, not one she purchased for Sophie even though she did give it to her, but one she had originally for herself and used it to help with her problems.

Like as a surrogate daughter? Exactly like that. Isn't that a little weird? I don't want to be the type to judge. We listen and we don't judge.

But I am judging and so should have Sophie because as things progressed, we find out there's a lot more that's wrong with Martine. Sophie grows up and her relationship with her mother gets more and more strained. Martine wants her to be a doctor despite what Sophie wants.

Martine wants her to stay away from boys until she's 18. But that's a normal thing when it comes to mother and daughter relationships. True, but it gets a little dark after Sophie actually meets and falls in love with a man.

Sophie starts sneaking out to meet up with a Joseph when her mother is busy working night shifts. One day when Sophie goes out to meet with Joseph, she returns late in the night to find her mother with a belt. Oh, I remember my sneaky linkups.

I just know her mother was ready to turn her every way but loose. Yep, so when Sophie walks through the door, all hell breaks loose. At first Martine is loud and angry, but then she gets a little quiet and pulls Sophie to her room and proceeds to test her.

What do you mean by test her? As in, she has Sophie lay down on her bed and proceeds to use her fingers to test if Sophie is still a virgin. Oh my goodness, what? Yep, which she revealed earlier in the book is something her mother, Sophie's grandmother, used to do to her when she was a child. Martine did this for weeks, traumatizing Sophie until the point where she takes her own virginity causing her mother to kick her out once she does not meet her standards.

She runs away with Joseph, the two of them get married and she lives a difficult life trying to deal with the lasting effects those purity tests left on her. She struggles with dealing with that trauma and her complicated relationship with her mother. Sophie's story about her relationship with her mother highlights the depths of mother-daughter relationships that come with a Caribbean identity.

I think Sophie's relationship with her mother represents a few things. What do you think the relationship represents? I think the relationship shows that Caribbean mothers have very little boundaries with their daughters. They are either constantly overstepping or oversharing.

In the case of Sophie Martine, Martine did both of these things. She overstepped Sophie's boundaries, violating her every day for weeks in her failed attempts to ensure that she was pure. In her mind, she was doing the right thing because this was something her mother did to her after her mother as well.

So for Martine, overstepping was her motherly duty. Motherly duty my behind. As for oversharing, I've learned through personal experience that Caribbean mothers love to overshare.

They tell their daughters no matter the age of their problems, putting a lot of pressure onto them and making them feel almost guilty. When Martine has a nightmare shortly after Sophie was brought home, she explains that it is because of the circumstances surrounding Sophie's birth. A child at Sophie's age should not know the source of her mother's nightmares is because of rape that results in her birth.

That adds to the trauma for Sophie and makes her feel a lot like a burden. This is common behavior for Caribbean mothers. Yeah and some mothers don't even tell their daughters that they have an overprotective guard on them.

They just have it on them for no reason at all. Another thing about the relationship is that I think it shows a lot of Caribbean mothers see their daughters as mirrors of sorts. They use them to act out their unfinished goals and their unmet desires that they never got to accomplish when they were younger.

In the beginning, when Martine was introducing Sophie to her boyfriend Mark, he asked what Sophie wanted to be when she grew up. Her mother cut in and said that Sophie was too young to know, but then immediately turned to Sophie and said, you are going to be a doctor. When Danticat first wrote about Martine's environment, her apartment, she wrote that there was a medical book on the table.

So, it's obvious that Martine is the one that wants to be a doctor, but because she went through so much in her life, she thinks it's a little too late for her. So, she is using her daughter to reach that goal. She does this a few times in the book, like when they both discuss Ati not going to school.

Martine said this is up to Sophie to bring them respect. She says, if you make something of yourself in life, we will all succeed. You can raise our heads.

I heard that you're gonna be a doctor line before. Right, so Martine is using Sophie to bring honor to the entire family in a way, but when she thinks that Sophie is having sex, she sees a little too much of herself in her and kicks her out. Her flaws were being reflected in Sophie's face and she couldn't live with it.

So, what happened with Martine and Sophie after she kicked Sophie out? Eventually, her and Sophie meet a few years later when Sophie is back in Haiti, running away from her problems that stem from her mother's purity tests. They reconcile and begin to have a relationship again before Martine ultimately kills herself. Sophie, who hasn't been back in Haiti since she was 12, bonds over with Ati and her mother.

This reminds me of a quote I read in a paper written by Grace Ali that discussed mothers and the motherland. The quote goes, we are bonded in the loss of separation from mothers and motherlands. So, Caribbean mothers can be extremely caring for their children, but their connection with their daughters almost always have a hint of hostility or friction.

(18:37 - 18:57)

Their relationship is too complex to be explained in simple terms. Not only Sophie, but Martine has been through a lot. I know.

I also know that you have some pieces you would like to share. I do. Have you heard about the iconic Jamaican poet, London Goodstone? No, tell me a little about her.

(18:57 - 20:37)

London Goodstone was born in Kingstown, Jamaica and in 2018, she received a Windham Campbell Literature Prize. And in 2019, she was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. I just love to see Black people getting acknowledged for their hard work and talent.

Right? Many of her poems highlight the relationships between mothers and daughters, siblings, and extended family members. She often portrays the complexity of these relationships capturing the joy, tension, and emotional depths within families. There is nothing quite like a mother-daughter relationship.

One of her poems that I really resonate with a lot is, For My Mother, May I Inhabit Half of Her Shred. Goodstone captures the complexity of a mother's role in the family, revealing how the personal aspects and the historical aspects intersect. Okay, tell me a little about this.

Let's get right into a line from her poem that stuck with me. Goodstone wrote, She could work miracles. She would make a garment from a square of cloth in a span of definite time or feed 20 people on a stool made from fallen from the head cabbage leaves and a carrot and a chocho and a palm full of meat.

Now that sounds like a good mother right there. A good mother indeed. And it reminded me of my own mother, even my grandmother.

Well, stories my mom told me about my grandmother, which made her the woman she is today. Do you mind sharing one of those stories? I'm glad you asked. Mama is what we call my grandmother.

Mama was a chef and a kind hearted soul. I wish I was able to taste her cooking. But on the other hand, my mom could cook.

So you mentioned my grandmother. I know that food was hitting. Yup, and it always does.

(20:38 - 21:15)

My grandmother would not just make food for her and the people in her house. If you was walking down the lane, she had extras for everyone. She would buy extra pound of meat and rice.

That's actually so sweet. And that's just one story. And now I see why when my mom cooks, we always have leftovers.

Not because the food is not good, but because she's taking what she learned from her mother, my grandmother, where you don't just cook for you and your household, but cook it for a

community. That is such a caring thing to do. I hope you inherit that from your mom.

I do too. That's not all though. There's another part that really hits home in Good Seem's Folk.

(21:15 - 22:05)

It's what she said. There's a place somewhere my mother never took the younger ones. A country where my father with the always smile, my father whom all women loved, who had the perpetual quality of wonder given only to a child, heard his bride.

How does this hit home? Now this is a question I'm not glad you asked, but since you did, I might as well tell you. My dad's Jamaican. I think I said it though.
That little rumor where you hear around about Jamaican men being cheaters. Yeah, believe him. I would not say my dad was a loyal man, but a loving man.

And a loving man to multiple individuals indeed. And my mom is still married to him 30 years later. I don't know how she does it, but I do understand when Good Seem titled her poem, May I Ain't Have a Half of Her Strength.

(22:06 - 24:17)

Emphasis on the half. A next poem made by Good Seem that I feel deserves a lot of recognition is Mother, The Great Stones Got to Move. What's that one about? The poem is about overcoming oppression and moving past obstacles that prevent progress.

The speaker calls on their mother to help remove great stones that blocks the future of children, including stones of poverty, violence, and social injustice. The repetitive refrain of Mother, These Great Stones Got to Move emphasizes the urge, need for change. So it's about generational trauma.

Yes, indeed. Good Seem wrote, "For the years going out came in fat at first, but towards the harvest it grew lean, and many mild corners gathered white, and others kind of poison, powdered white, was brought in to replace what was green. And dead cells live in one hand, and with the other dead palms are gone.

Then death gets death pitched in the paper accent. Where does all this death come from?" This is actually really intense and a thoughtful question. Yes, it is, and it's important to remember that British had control over Jamaica from 1655 until 1962.

Oh, I almost forgot about the British controlling Jamaica. Yeah, and Jamaica was pulled into a drug trade. The drug trade in the 18th century Britain, particularly the involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and the production of illegal substances, that had a huge impact on Jamaica.

Driven by the drug trade, debt comes to a people already broken by the legacy of slavery and colonialism. When she tied together in her fifth stanza, saying Narcissus became the soup and meat for its users. Oh wow, so Britain really corrupted Jamaica.

They sure did, and Gerstein ended it off with, mother these great stones got to move. You know what that means? No. When she says great stones, she's referring to the great burdens Jamaica has faced due to colonialism times, and how it continues to affect the people of Jamaica.

(24:17 - 30:19)

And when she says mother is because a mother is known as a nurturing figure, so she calls on a mother to take up the vote in helping the burdens go away. Wow, that is enlightening and a great takeaway on that note. That actually wraps up today's episode.
We'd cover the complexities on mother-daughter relationships and touched on generational trauma. Thank you for being here for a discussion on Baddies Who Read. Next up we have Leticia.

Okay girl, get it, get it, get it. Okay, what you gonna be talking to us about girl? Okay, she gonna be talking about, I know what you gonna talk about. Girl, I already know, I already know.

You gonna talk about what we don't want to talk about, what we know we don't want to talk about. I got you. Leticia is gonna be talking to us about colonialism and multi-generational trauma in womanhood.

Wow, that's a mouthful and that's a lot, right? And I told y'all to get y'all Kleenex out in the last segment, so y'all better have gotten it out because if y'all thought Leticia was gonna come in nice and soft, no, she's coming out swinging, right? And she's gonna go deep fast, like pause, ayo, right? But some trigger warnings I have to give you for this next up topic, right? If y'all didn't get triggered by the mother-daughter situation in the last segment, let me let you know right now that Leticia will not hold back in this one, right? And so, in this next topic, my listening buddies, let's let Leticia take it away. Come on, girl, teach us something. This podcast explores the stories and legacies that shape our humanity.

Exploring multi-generational trauma, mental health, and cultural identity and Afro-Caribbean lives. Today's episode explores an intricate, tangible theme of multi-generational trauma, mental health, and cultural identity. Today, we will examine multi-generational identity and mental health issues through the lens of Afro-Caribbean womanhood and the enduring effects of colonialism.

Colonialism left behind more than just borders and systems. The trauma reflects deep and often painful marked family dynamics. Playwright Quahim Kouy-Armand captures stories that reflect the emotional intricacies of Afro-Caribbean life, usually centering on strained family

relationships.

An example is Elamina's Kitchen. In London's Hackney Nave Deli, a hard-working father tries to protect his son, Ashley, from the pull of gang culture. Through this story, Kouy-Armand examines the generational divide and the unhealing wounds caused by systemic racism and colonial displacement.

One of the play's most poignant aspects is Deli's relationship with his father, Clifton. In Bonds and Bondage, page 12, Ashley laughs, you're a punk dad. I was giving you a chance, a chance to let the whole world know, the whole area know, that you're Ashley's father, and so we roll on.

But no, you want to stay small and insignificant, weak. You disgust me. This topic is evident throughout the writers of literature of colonial times.

As we, the readers, explore the concepts of hungry ghosts, a reoccurring pattern emerged. Children expressing anger towards parents who fail to shield themselves or their children from prejudice and hatred. Their complex relationship is a repeating pattern of emotional detachment that often is rooted in multi-generational trauma.

This pattern underscores how historical trauma continues to affect present-day relationships. Beyond family dynamics, Kouy-Armand also addresses cultural identity, particularly delineation of those of mixed heritage. Kouy-Armand works challenge simplistic ideas of identity, urging audience to confront their biases and embrace the complexity of dual heritage.

Your identity is valid, and it is okay to feel the tension that comes with it. What does this mean for mental health in Afro-Caribbean communities? Multi-generational trauma is not just a thing of the past. It is ongoing reality.

It is more than likely that corrobidity of challenges such as depression, anxiety, and fractured family bonds. The podcast inspires us, starting with a healing and awareness. It is about proclaiming our stories, honoring our heritage, and fostering up dialogue.

Our stories matter because sharing our stories can be a decisive step toward healing. How do our family history and cultural identity shape our perspective? What stories we have passed down to us, whether painful or empowering? Sharing these stories, much like what Kouy Armand does in his plays, can be a step toward internal healing. A poem that I wrote inspired me through a book called Hungry Ghost.

A cry for freedom. They say here's a queen, no diamonds, no crowns. As loud as she screams, the sounds of lockdown.

The ghost in the shadows brings stories untold, passing the legacy stories of old. Behind island shores, the pain she endures, she thought life was secure, but a life so unsure. I felt their weight, yes, heavy and deep.

(30:19 - 30:29)

In every scar they bared and in every scar they keep. Layers and layers, it's more than it seems. Caribbean's are haunted by nightmares and dreams.

(30:30 - 31:19)

In each sacrifice, there's strength and regret. Reminded by trauma they'll never forget. They see the blue waves and hot suns in the sands.

They don't see the chains and pains on her hands. Behind the closed doors, she fights through the pain. A queen screams in silence, a queen must maintain.

It's not just a plot, it's a world full of scars. A history of trauma beneath the moon stars. The ghost in the shadows, they're stories that still bleed.

History lingers and cries out to be free. Bound by the echoes, the past can't stay gone. Legacies haunt them and still carry on.

(31:20 - 31:43)

Not by their choices, inherited pain. Bound by the curses remains in their veins. My mama maintains, her tears in the rain.

Holds on to the shame, her past is to blame. Her silence remains, her life was so drained. She took to her grave till death with the chains.

(31:45 - 32:06)

What does this mean for mental health in Afro-Caribbean communities? Multi-generational trauma is not just a thing of the past, it's an ongoing reality. It is more than likely that a comorbidity of challenges such as depression, anxiety, and fractured family bonds. The podcast inspires us to starting with healing and awareness.

(32:07 - 33:56)

It is about reclaiming our stories, honoring our heritage, enforcing open dialogue. Our stories matter because sharing our stories can be a decisive step towards healing, a call to action. Thank you for joining me on this colonial journey through the of colonialism, resilience, and identity.

Let us continue to amplify the voices of Afro-Caribbean women and communities, celebrating their resilience and building understanding and solidarity. We have a voice. We must continue to cry out freedom, to cry out equality.

We are all in bondages that seem invisible but are still there. It's like being in a cage with an

open door that you can walk out, seem like you can't. Well, let's keep speaking out.

Let's keep unity. Until next time, stay curious and compassionate. All right.

Now, Latisha out here dropping knowledge. Shoot, she taught me a few things. I ain't even know, girl.

You was gonna go, dang. Okay. Here's Grace now to lead us in a discussion about how Black women are portrayed in media and how colorism affects that portrayal.

Wow. Yo, we really got to talk about this because let me let you know, like, I don't like how my sisters are portrayed out here in these music videos. Like, why we always got to be in bikini bottoms? Like, we don't got clothes.

There's not enough clothes out here in the world. Like, shoot. But, Grace, teach us something.

Like, lead us through that, girl. Like, what you learned? Put a song. This is Grace and welcome to my segment.
(33:57 - 34:29)

Today, I'll be discussing colorism and its stronghold on the Black diaspora in general, but especially in the Caribbean. So, I have a few pieces of text that I wanted to read to kind of give some historical context, but colorism in general is something that is so deeply ingrained in the Black imaginary all over the diaspora. I had an interesting experience growing up.

(34:30 - 39:24)

A lot of Black people say that they weren't surrounded enough by their culture and not surrounded enough by other Black people, but because I, you know, grew up in a major city that's a really big cultural hub. My whole life up until high school, I was only surrounded by other Black people, specifically other Caribbean people, and that's given me the unique perspective of my first bully as a dark-skinned Black woman. Wasn't a white person, but my fellow Black Caribbean counterparts.

For example, just I'm half African, half Caribbean. As a kid, I would get my feelings hurt when other kids would call me African because it was something that was spewed as an insult. Being called African wasn't more of like, oh, you're African.

It was more of, you're African, and that gave me a negative connotation in my mind, and then as a layer, it was like you're African and you have dark skin, and so that's led me to just a lot of perspective on colorism, but let's look into kind of the origins and the beginnings of the seeds of colorism. So obviously, that was slavery, and I have a quote here from Henriquez in Color Contemporary Society, and this is located on page 208. It says, one of the most important characteristics of society in the British Caribbean is its white bias.

This can be regarded as both a conscious and unconscious part of a majority of the population of African descent to approximate as closely as possible to the European. The development of the white bias can be traced back to the slavery period when the white slave owner was the source of all power, authority, and prestige. The hierarchical society of the plantocracy was pyramidal in form, the mass of black slaves forming the basis of the pyramid and the white planters in its apex.

So like just to stop there, I thought it was just very interesting because that is colorism in its definition, is just like how close are you to whiteness? How much do you blur the lines, you know? Moving on. An important distinction was made between between field slaves, the majority, and domestic slaves. The latter admitted to the intimacies of life in the planter's household was able to acquire European cultural traits denied for the most part to field slaves.

Imitation of the European combined with his relatively privileged position made the domestic slave both envied and admired by his counterpart in the fields. And I thought this was really interesting. So this next part, I have something to say about that.

So he continues to say, this historical situation was further complicated by the development of concubinage and manumission. Concubinage on the part of white men and Negro women led to the creation of a mulatto slave offspring. In many instances, these children were favored by their master fathers.

Such favor could vary from remission of tasks to, in exceptional cases, being sent to Europe to be educated. In these circumstances, it was inevitable that the mulattoes or jeunes de couleur should occupy an important and distinctive position in the Serval population. So like obviously over time, we're seeing a pattern of favoritism amongst those who were lighter skinned and mixed rather than fully black and subjected to the fields.

I can only imagine over time, not only would this build some type of resentment, but then also sets a standard, which he states in that last sentence. I find it so interesting because as a slave, you're indoctrinated to perceive your master as someone who is a pinnacle of God, someone who is a status of wealth, power, the ideal life. And so on one hand, you have someone who is oppressing you.

(39:25 - 42:39)

But then on that same hand, they're also idealized and set as the standard for what success and wealth and power looks like. So then Henriquez goes on to say, it is suggested that there has always been historically an association of things non-European with the primitive, uncouth, and backward in the minds of the colored and Negro peoples of the West Indies. Correspondingly, the developed and the advanced are epitomized in the European.

This can be seen in curious ways. Middle class Jamaicans who visit the U.S. three or four times a year for shopping and sightseeing, there are cheap return fares to Miami, tend to minimize events in the Negro America struggle for civil rights and to disassociate themselves from it. Side by side with historical affection for Britain, there is warmth and affection for the USA with the predicament of the Negro conveniently mine.

On the other hand, where they have attained or almost attained parity in numbers with the African population, as in Trinidad and Guyana, the situation is quite different. They form, in fact, their own society apart from the African and colored elements. Status is important in terms of this rather than in terms of the total society.

Economic power and political power is shared by both sections. The European element, although having little political but a great deal of economic power, tends to dominate the social hierarchy. So this is describing the parallels between Black people in the Caribbean diaspora, but also the Indian community in the diaspora.

And that also created a clash in society because usually in a lot of Caribbean countries, it is quite homogenous. But after the introduction of the Indian population to places like Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, it now creates two separate ethnic groups that are completely unrelated in culture but are now competing against each other. Something that I find very
interesting is even that population is seen as ideal because although they are not white, their hair is of a looser texture, their skin can come a little lighter, and their features are not as tied to Blackness, which over time also gave them an updated status in society just for that little separation from Blackness.

And then I want to talk about in the middle where they say that Caribbeans separate themselves from the identity of Africans and from African-Americans and the rest of the diaspora. And this goes the same for Africans as well. Africans don't associate with Caribbeans or African-Americans because people perceive African-Americans as, they disassociate themselves because they don't want to be tied to American slavery.

(42:39 - 43:08)

They don't want to be tied to the archetype of African-American. And so what that creates is just a big cultural divide that contributes even more. So something that correlates directly but indirectly that we're going to get into is also the perception of beauty and body types and its ties to color when it comes to beauty standards in the Black community.

(43:09 - 44:57)

So there's the archetype that's been constructed from colonialism of the Black female body to be perceived as voluptuous, curvaceous. And I have a text by Gentle Spart called Controlling Beauty

Ideals. One thing said is this construction of the Black female body as big and unwomanly and thus built for functionality and labor was employed to affirm the use of Black women as slave labor in Europe.

It helped to create what I refer to as the ideology of the thick Black woman, the notion that Black women are naturally curvy and On the other hand, many societies such as those of the Afro-Caribbean uphold the voluptuous body as a marker of desirable Black femininity. And I thought that this was interesting because yeah, if we look even to the early 2000s and you look at media, it was always white women saying, oh, do you think my butt looks fat? We see an obsession with weight loss. We see an obsession with thinness.

But then in the Black community at the same time, we see the obsession with curvaceousness and we see how that has become the ideal. So now in the Black community, we're idealizing bigger boobs, bigger butt, a thicker body. And that is what we came to perceive as what's feminine and what's the standard in complete contrast to white women at the time.

(44:57 - 47:14)

But it also, it just stems from plain and simple hypersexualization. And then I think all of this also roots from the Mammy archetype, the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire archetype. So colorism had a humongous impact on this.

So the Mammy, on page 203, Gentle's part says, an infamous long-standing image is that of the Mammy figure. An infamous long-standing image is that of the Mammy figure. This epitome of the faithful, obedient, domestic servant was created to justify Black women's exploitation as house slaves and restrict them to domestic service.

The Mammy's bigger body significantly contributes to this construction of Black femininity as her large body, dark skin, and round facial features create an image that poses no sexual threat to white women. Her body was used to mark her as docile and asexual. I find this is interesting.

So then this is where we get to media, where if we even look at Black media of the early 2000s, and we look at the representation that we got as a Black family, there is such a clear and common theme. There's the dark-skinned father, the light-skinned or brown-skinned mother, the dark-skinned father, and the light-skinned, mixed-looking sister. And I always found this very interesting, and I think that it represents where we are in the Black community when it comes to perceived masculinity and perceived femininity.

Period. Period. Listen, my beautiful baddies.

Honestly, there's just so much, you know, after hearing all these ladies going through this, Ariana, Shania, Bianca, Letitia, Grace, wow. Like, there is just so much that could be said about all these topics. Like, we could be here forever and a half, right? And so these amazing women have accompanied us through all these themes, and they've graciously dived in and done their

research to educate us.

(47:15 - 47:49)

And ultimately, it's up to us to continue educating ourselves and to stay informed, right? Like, if you're informed, if you're educated, you can make an informed decision, right? You can know how to carry yourself, you can know how to educate others, and especially my baddies out there. Like, keep your head up, ladies. You know, keep your head up.

Thank you all for listening to today's podcast. See you next time on Baddies Who Read. This is your host, Juliemarie Hernandez.

Tune in next time.