

I'm so excited about my guest today, Ifeanyi Awachie. I feel like we were destined to meet mmm, and I'll get into that in a second. And it's an amazing, talented, multidisciplinary artist. So we're just gonna jump right in. Actually, no, at first I wanna address how we met hmmm because I had a friend, a colleague here in my cohort who was telling me about you. And then you and I both went to see a lecture by Christina Sharp and Saidiah Hartman (great) here at Columbia. And so you were up here on campus and coincidentally we were sitting right next to each other. Yeah, exactly. What brought you to that event? Well, I love Christina Sharp's work. Of course, like everyone else probably I read in the wake when it came out and was just so struck by her use of language to reframe how we think about Blackness and specifically how we think about the afterlife of slavery to borrow from Sadie Hartman's work. And, you know, the event um and the way that it was curated really spoke to me because I couldn't believe we would have the chance to experience a reading from Sharp and then also basically take a class with her or have a workshop with her or a seminar with her. It was so great, mmm-hmm I mean, just like, I was just kind of like an odd just to be in the room with the two of them at the same time. Yeah mmm-hmm, it was just really such a wonderful treat. I was like, you know, this is one of the blessings of going to doing your doctorate in York City, you know? Yeah yeah I mean, I have to sometimes like remind myself of these blessings, you know, we're surrounded by so many amazing scholars, so many amazing Black women scholars, mmm-hmm and, you know, so it's just incredible. So yeah, I was sitting right next to you yeah, and I think it it was your shoes. You had like these interesting shoes and I just like started chatting with you and I'm like, wait a minute. Like I was supposed to meet you like so one of my one of my classmates was just telling me about you like two days ago (laughs). Right. Right. It was meant to be. Yes, really meant to be. So I'm so so excited. Yeah, you know, I'm actually going to start in on this question because you are doing your doctorate at NYU, New York University, Tish School of the Arts yeah. And I don't know if you know this, but I am an alum of NYU Tish School of the Arts film school. Right. I think you mentioned that that day, and that's such a great program. So that's Yes, I did my undergrad there. So I was so excited to see that you're there. And you were teaching this class. Is it over? You're still teaching it right now. You were teaching this class that you designed called Contemporary African and Black Diasporic Filmmaking this summer. Yeah. So it's starting next. Yeah, for sure. It's actually starting next month. It's in like the latter half of the summer sessions that I'm at NYU. But yeah, I'm really excited to be teaching it. I really thought that um, or I thought for a long time that the way that African film is taught, it often focuses on the kind of the canon of African cinema. It's a lot of like Francophone, African art films, and it's kind of the classics from a certain period, you know, it's just Motesbens, Black Girl, it's Tukibuki. It's like, I started to get this feeling as I was looking at curricula and like film programs, African film programs that, you know, of course, you always want to introduce audiences to African film by addressing, you know, the history and kind of the great works that have been made. But I started feeling like it's always the same, it's always the usual suspect. So it's kind of the same films that are taught and shown and screened. And it's often bothersome African cinema who are the focus. It's often like films again from this particular time. And I just thought there's so many amazing films, especially right now, kind of making the festival circuit, being installed in video installations in museums and being circulated in other ways that are being made by women that often have like, or that sometimes have like a queer narrative or a

queer politic that have a feminist politic and that really show that Africa, it does not just exist in the past, it's in the contemporary period. And that's a simple idea that I've been really passionate about since I first started kind of trying to occupy a position of mediating understandings of Africa for the public. And I can say more about that maybe later on, but yeah, I just wanted to really teach some of the films that I was really excited about under the banner of African film. I wanted to say like, this is African film too. It's, you know, it's uhm Martin Sims to African Desperate, which is talking about the African diaspora in a particular way. It's this amazing film, "Sleid Out" by Jessica Gineas that premiered last year. I don't know if it premiered at the African film festival here, but that was where I saw it. And that was one of the first screenings. That film being a film from Haiti, which is such an important part of the diaspora, to see a story set in Haiti from the perspective of these strong women protagonists and to have so much to talk about in relation to that film in terms of the cinematography and the rich visual story that's being told. I was just like, we need to talk about these films too, you know. - I love it. I mean, I feel like you're the perfect person to do that, not only because of like your scholarly pedigree, but also because you yourself are a filmmaker. You made a film that also is in festival circuit. this thing is not for you. Can you talk about that film? It looks so interesting. I was watching some of the like uh trailer on your Instagram. - Oh, thank you so much. Yes. So this thing is not for you. It's a film that I made in, well, between 2020 and 2022, I was working on the film and I got the chance to make it. I have to say their name and give credit to this amazing pair of women behind a production company based in Texas called Watts Productions. They hold a script writing contest every year and I won the contest in 2020 and as a result they funded my entire film for production (amazing!) editing. Yeah. And they're setting out to kind of an interesting way. Similarly to my course, they're trying to tell a different story about blackness through the films that they make and through the films that they support. They say that for each film they make, they're going to make one for someone else. So they're incredible. And um the film for me started even before then. I wrote the script around 2017. And I was inspired by two things. I was inspired by my family and conversations that we have intergenerationally about things like our Nigerian culture, but also about being in America and um dealing with race and the particular position from which we deal with race as Nigerian Americans. And even within that, we're all Nigerian-American you know my parents have a different position for me as immigrants. I have a different position from both them and my siblings as someone who immigrated at a very young age. I came to the States when I was a year and a half after I was born in Nigeria. And then my siblings have a different position as people were born here, were Nigerian and American. So I was thinking about that. Ton of honesty coats, article on reparations had just dropped. you know (laughs) I remember at the time, you know reparations is such a buzzword now, But at the time it was almost controversial that he was making a case for reparations to use the title of his essay in the Atlantic. They are do they are absolutely do yeah. And I love that it's such a it's becoming a more and more embraced and accepted idea. I think it makes so much sense. Economic reparations. And so yeah, those two kind of things came together in this film, which basically sees a family grappling with this question of reparations in a time when in the near future. And uhm it's interesting 'cause I didn't think of the film as speculative at the time, but as it's been circulating in festivals and things like this, some of the feedback, some of the words that have been used to describe the film are speculative, for

example.um And so it's speculative in the sense that I imagine the time in the future, in the near future, when we as a nation have finally elected a Black woman president. And I thought that would be the kind of president who might actually finally find a way to enact reparations. And so we see a Nigerian-American family in this time grappling with what this means for them. And it leads them to grapple more broadly with like, what does it mean for us to be Nigerian in America? And what does it mean to grapple with the differences that we have even within this family among ourselves, you know and so it stirs up all these questions for them. And you kind of see them over the course of the weekend where the youngest daughter in the family is graduating from high school. You see them kind of deal with all these things. - Wow, I've been studying Black intellectual thought with Dr. Cornell West for the last year mmm-hmm. And when you were just talking about that, I was immediately thinking about Lorraine Hansfury. And yeah, I mean, it was like definitely speaking to a reason in the sun. - Great, great. - I'm so excited. I can't wait to see that. Uh So after this, I'm gonna have to find out where we can see that. But I wanna kind of go back and think about sort of your, how this all came to be mmm-hmm. So thinking back to your educational experiences and your artistic practice and thinking about, were there any particular events or experiences or persons in your childhood educational experience that influenced your decision or your proclivity towards the arts? - mmmm You know what, it's interesting. I wish, I deeply wish that I could name, you know, the kinds of like black feminist artists and thinkers that I respect so much now, But when I was growing up, I was really inspired by the white candidate (laughs) thinking about it now. You know, like one. So my background is in writing. I come to film through writing. I come to film as a writer and even in the study of film, I think a lot about watching films as close reading, which I learned as, you know, in being trained as an English major and undergrad. And before that, you know, I first started writing by like trying to copy Emily Dickinson's work. And I was really inspired by Walt Whitman's song of myself, I believe it's called. And I think that speaks to you know the whiteness of our education system in this country. I was not exposed to the black literature that I've come to now. I mean, we're just talking about writers like Christina Sharp and Saidiah Hartman, whose "Lose Your Mother" inspired me and taught me so much about blackness. Later on, as I was coming into my own blackness, I wasn't taught Audrey Lawrence-Sammy, which was so inspiring for me just in terms of form, not to mention, you know, in the way that it deals with like a queer coming, not coming of age, but a queer coming into self-narrative mmm-hmm uh for black women. So yeah, I mean, I was really kind of ushered into writing and literature through kind of some of these canonical kind of figures. I also want to mention that I made the choice to seriously pursue the arts in a way that feels a bit late. I decided to take the art seriously as kind of a path after college, right? And that was partly because in my Nigerian family, it wasn't encouraged as a path. And for some listeners, this is gonna be a tale as old as time, no matter if you're Nigerian or Black or just a first generation immigrant from another background. My parents didn't see that as a viable path, right? And so I kind of chose the path that I went down in spite of that. But um yeah, I think as I was at that critical juncture between kind of the end of my undergrad education and entering the professional world, I feel it's important to mention I was kind of, I went to Yale, so I started toward the end of my time there hanging out around the art school with an amazing kind of group of black artists who were, who were studying there and have gone on to do amazing things. And between kind of um attending crits there and starting to go to programming

at the Yale Art Gallery because they were finally starting to program artists from the diaspora. I was exposed to artists like Njideka Kouignoli-Crosby, the painter mmm-hmm who gave a talk there. This was around like 2015 probably. And um I was so excited to see someone with a similar background to mine in this kind of hallowed art space and representing her hybrid narrative as a Nigerian American. And even she's a Nigerian American in a different way than I am, right? As someone who grew up there. But the way that she spoke about weaving her two cultures together, making her a family, you know, living in the US and kind of having this nostalgia for Nigeria, it really resonated with me. And so I remember she was one of my entry points into art. And Cain Day Wiley, you know, I think he was at a critical juncture in his career at the time. and I loved his work as well. And these African artists and diasporic artists are part of what got me interested in um visual art and kind of delving deeper into visual art. And ever since then, kind of been, there's been a conversation of back and forth between visual art and writing and now film. 'Cause my practice and my scholarship and my work has always been interdisciplinary. It's always focused on all these different forms art. And um at the moment, it's really kind of, I've kind of wanted to focus a bit more on a particular medium. But yeah, those are a few of the artists that really kind of inspired me. You know, as you were saying so many things that were had my mind sort of percolating one, um when you mentioned, early on your parents, you know, weren't really like super excited about your pursuing the arts. That's sort of like the reason one of the reasons why I wanted to do this podcast in the first place because I remember there was a period when I was living and working in West Africa and Senegal and I was working with a different artist and there was a woman artist and young woman sculptor and she was telling me about how she was making all this artwork and when she wanted to go to college she told her father and her family that she wanted to go to art school and her dad was like no and he took her work and put it in the river. Oh, God. And I was like, dang, you know, like, and so I just thinking about how hard it is to be an artist of a woman and to be an artist in many places of the world, you know, like just to hear the words, I am an artist come from women is like a revolutionary statement just in and of itself, you know, in us and also because of what you were saying like, you know, how in schooling spaces, we don't get exposed to, you know, a wide range of artistic practitioners, mmm-hmm you know, it's usually very Euro-centered, whitewashed curricula. And I experienced that too. It wasn't really until I went to college that I really started to become, you know, exposed to all the amazing, yeah you know, black scholars, black artists who have like, it shaped, you know, my scholarship in my just my life, you know? And so it's like, what would it be like if that could happen so much sooner? You know, right like, why does it have to be that we have to wait until college to have those, that exposure? Why can't it be like an elementary school, middle school, high school? And what kind of impact might that have on us as, you know, young scholars and creatives? Yeah yeah. You know, so definitely a lot of that was resonating. You mentioned your you're into disciplinarity and I'm so fascinated with your, the work that you do across different mediums, you're curating, you're directing, you're writing, you're teaching, you're doing photography, installation, even painting (laughs). So I mean, I love that you, I look at you as sort of someone who just likes to experiment and just like try different things.mmm-hmm And so how does your artistic journey in and through your interdisciplinary studies influence your artistic practices and how do these different disciplines intersect and inform your creativity? I think the best way I can answer that is by saying that

everything that I do is part of a kind of central thesis um that's related to what I said before about how Africa is here now. Africa is not relegated to a distant past. Africa is not relegated to a distant geography. I want to attest to the presence of the African diaspora in relation to contemporary culture. And um in many ways, I'm trying to tell my own story. I'm trying to assert that I am an African woman who is in the here and now. I'm in the here and now of American culture. I'm in the here and now of diasporic culture more broadly. I'm even in the here and now of Western culture, - Right, and I feel that when um people conceive of Africa, that image that emerges, that pops into their head is so different from my lived experience, granted as someone who didn't grow up on the continent, but I think that my experience poses a challenge to that monolithic image of Africa in many ways. And so really in everything I'm doing you know, I explained how I'm kind of trying to address this in my course, in my teaching, in my film you know, part of why I wanted to make the film was because I wanted to see a Nigerian-American family on screen. I haven't seen that. You know, I've heard whisperings of different projects that are um popping up and starting to show that. And I think I have to say in independent filmmaking, independent diasporic filmmaking, that those kinds of narratives are emerging now. I can think of the filmmaker, Tomisin Adepeju, in London, who's putting the Nigerian diasporic family on screen from a British perspective, even though I know he identifies more as more with his Nigerian nationality for different reasons. And my friend actually, and then my youth film program is a beautiful filmmaker, Ifeyinwa Arinze, who is making films about the diasporic Nigerian family from the perspective of strong, the strong women character. So these narratives are emerging, but in terms of the mainstream especially, I just wasn't seeing Nigerians you know in these diaspora contexts in the US having everyday experiences or having extraordinary experiences like you know living at a time when reparations are now coming due. And so in all these different projects, I'm approaching the same question from different angles and through different mediums. Sometimes you know when I get inspired to start one of these projects, um whether it's curating an installation or writing a short story, which is also part of my writing practice, my intuition tells me, okay, this one needs to be a screenplay or this one needs to be a syllabus (laughs). And those different forms, right, have something valuable to offer to the way that I'm exploring this question and in the way that it can be received. They all have something, something valuable to offer to that, to this constant pursuit and this constant exploration. So um I do all of these things just to kind of take advantage of those different, of the different tools that they each offer. You know, so one of my professors uh here at Teachers College, who is now uh at University of Southern California, my other alma mater, Dr. Christopher Emden, he talked about on his, he has this live that he does on Instagram. he talked about one time how this idea that we had to be like, you know, do one thing, like that if like a, you know, that phrase that people say a jack of all trades master of...mmm-hmm, like that that is like somebody whack who didn't have like lots of different skills, you know, and then I think about Catherine McCutrick who writes mmm-hmm about in Dear Science, she talks about mmm-hmminterdisciplinarity as something that's very African that that's just sort of how we operate. And so when I hear you talking, I'm just like, "Yes, that's just kind of how we are." Being stifled and told, "Oh, no, you need to do one thing." great These things feed each other. And you have choices like Why would we want to stifle or limit someone's choices mmm-hmm or limit them from experimenting mmm-hmm? We would miss out on all the different things that they have to offer. You know

mmm-hmm Yeah, there's a lot of wack people out there who want to tell us, like, you know yeah, you have to do one thing, but like, that just means that they don't have multiple literacies. Great great They don't have multiple capabilities. You know, they're not like maybe multi-passionate, you know?mmm-hmm And so I just love that you're just like an embodiment of that. So, um, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for existing. Wow. Thank you so much (laughs). I appreciate that. Yeah. So in your scholarly writing and a published article, you explore the role of oral histories in shaping cultural narratives.mmm-hmm Can you talk about the role of oral histories in preserving and amplifying or visualizing these marginalized voices? - mmm-hmm Yeah, absolutely. In that article, I was really thinking about the live events um and I was curating live events a lot at the time. And I was thinking about how, you know, when those events don't necessarily focus on members of the dominant group, when those events, for example, are focused on black women and African women and diasporic women, for example, they may not be archived in the same way as an event that's deemed more important because it's um looking at the work and appealing to audiences of people who are deemed more important because they're white male or part of the dominant, part of other dominant groups, right? Mmm-hmm Straight, et cetera. And so I was thinking about how after a kind of one-off events, like a festival or a talk or another kind of artistic program, such as the ones I've been putting together, Black women audiences talk (laughs) about what they experienced. And they might like message their homegirls about what they saw. And they might write something about it. But in many cases, they're you know debriefing in conversations as they leave the venue or they're having copy after and they're talking about what they just experienced and witnessed together. And I started thinking about those as archives and reporting archives of these platforms for arts and creativity by black women, African women, diasporic women. And so I really was fascinated by the idea of like the the post-event conversation and the whispers and the WhatsApp messages that follow with the events that I was curating. And I wanted to argue that that is where oral histories of these important events exist. And there's potential in the retelling you know of these experiences for those events to live on. And so I'm really,... I really have a lot of respect for kind of, yeah, kind of the post-event debrief or the post-event chat, the way that girlfriends talk after they go to an exhibition of African women's art, for example. And I do think that more resources need to be dedicated so that these events can actually be documented in an even more, let's say, lasting way mmm-hmm or a way that's able to be circulated on a broader scale. And I'm being careful not to say documented or archived in a proper way or even a permanent way, 'cause I don't think that written documentation is inherently better than oral histories. But I think one thing that written documentation does offer is the chance for these experiences to be shared at a larger scale. Um And the power of these conversations that I'm talking about is their intimacy, but they don't necessarily offer that same inclusivity in terms of enfolding broader and broader kind of audiences, broader and broader communities into what happened at the event. So yeah, I think I think that as black women, black women artists, black women, art enthusiasts, we should just continue to talk to each other and among ourselves, record these events by sharing with each other what happened. And at the same time, I'm not saying that we can't also benefit from the materials and the resources to archive the events in other ways. But I did wanna say that in the absence of those resources, archives do exist of these exhibitions, these screenings, these talks, etc. Absolutely. And another area that's also overlooked, as I was

hearing you talk, I'm thinking about digital landscapes mmm-hmm like social media, because a lot of these conversations or, you know, engagements extend into the digital landscape. And a lot of times mmm-hmm, you know, people, scholars are necessarily looking there mmm-hmm. And, you So, yeah, I mean, even this podcast, you know, Columbia University is really trying to support this idea on a multimodal scholarship. Mmm great And so like, you know, these episodes, these oral histories are part of, you know, because they selected this podcast for a partnership mmm-hmm. And so like, it's going to be part of their archives, you know mmm-hmm, and, and sightable research mmm-hmm, you know, with DOI numbers and things like that. that. So I love that mmm-hmm. That's wonderful. By the way, such a huge accomplishment. Thank you so much. Well done. I'm so grateful to you for being a part of this. I'm grateful to you. Especially before it like is actually out because these very first eight recordings I'm doing, you know mmm-hmm, it's all behind the scenes mmm-hmm, you know, but so you all are walking with me in this, taking this leap of faith with me. And I appreciate it. I'm very grateful. Pleasure (laughs). So I wanted to ask you about, so you've had these very amazing opportunities to travel and do residencies or fellowships in different countries mmm-hmm. And I know how important that can be in the trajectory of an artist mmm-hmm. And I was just wondering if you could speak to that, the role of these residencies, fellowships, how they have been an important factor in your artistic growth,um and in a way that is encouraging to other women mmm-hmm artists that they should pursue these opportunities and also to people who are funding and creating those opportunities that that they should keep doing that. Well, okay, so two kind of international experiences come to mind.um And actually the first was my trip to or the first is my trip to Brazil in 2018, which was funded by the Arts Council of um England. I went there for a week and I went there because previously I had been invited to a conference in Colombia that was run by the former Minister of Culture and the first Black woman minister in that government, Paola Moreno. At her conference I met the director of Ferapretta, which is the largest Afro-Brazilian gathering in Latin America. And it's a, it's a fair that also has a curatorial program of talks and live events. And um the director, Adriana Barbosa, I met her in Colombia, and we talked about, you know, collaborating somehow in the future. And that got me interested in, of course, coming to see what she does with Verapetha and to see how we could potentially work together. And so I was able to go to Brazil to Sao Paulo in November of 2018, and just experience Verapetha. And That trip was so enriching for so many reasons. I think the first thing that I took away from it that I think is important is the fact that Brazil is a black country (laughs). You know, for all their efforts to paint it otherwise. That's a black country. And the people that I spoke to that I bet are also African in such a deep, beautiful, powerful way. I spoke to someone who on a Sunday was getting ready to go to, you know, like a spiritual, she was doing the epiphany of going to church on a Sunday, but she was going to practice, I believe, you know, your spirituality right. And that was just so powerful to me that, you know, she was that in touch with her African heritage that it was an active part of her weekly life, engaging with the spirituality in community with others was this active and everyday part of her weekly life, but also like a special part of her regular life. Mmm-hmm And so since then, it's just been so clear to me that like, we in the US, we across the diaspora, we need to know about Brazil, like we need to, we need to be in community somehow with our counterparts there. When it comes to my teaching, I'm so convinced that anyone who's dealing with a diasporic cinema needs to grapple with black Brazilian cinema as

part of that. And sadly, I don't have Black Brazilian films on my syllabus. Um And I'm confident that as the course continues to evolve and as I continue to teach it, and as I teach other courses, I'll incorporate more. And actually, one of my dreams now, having TA for a Brazilian cinema course last spring, is to teach a Black Brazilian cinema course. Or to teach a Brazilian course, right? Brazilian cinema class, but teach all Black Brazilian films. Because that is a majority Black country. And-- And um the largest population of black people outside of Africa. Exactly. Exactly. So I think there's a certain level of consciousness about that and a certain level of familiarity with Brazil and kind of our collective consciousness and a familiarity with Brazil as a black country in that consciousness. But it needs to be explored even further. And, you know, this isn't even to talk of Brazilian activism. The incredible Marielle Franco, who was murdered right before I visited Brazil, who was not only a Black feminist activist, but a queer woman, a radical Black woman. And it's the fact that her sister is now in government, and that now there's a head of Indigenous affairs in Brazil, and that there's now, I believe, a Black vice president, vice um president who's a woman, if I'm remembering that correctly. But, but yeah, there's incredible things happening politically in Brazil as well at the hands or by the hands of black women. And so that trip just really put me in touch with this part of the diaspora, you know, this Portuguese speaking part of the diaspora that I had no connection to before and just brought in my conception of like the borders of Africa and the black diaspora. So that was super, super important. And I'm not even talking about the music I was exposed to through FEDA but the style and the way people had them relating to each other and you know the talks. I ended up being part of a panel there about, uh I think, like black creativity in different mediums, something like that. And I think I went to a couple of other talks. So I'm not even doing the breadth of the events kind of curatorial mandate justice. Mmm-hmm But that's the heart of what I took from it, is that we need to be contending with Brazil as people who say we're interested in blackness in Africa, yeah and especially in black diasporic creativity. Yeah. Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. I mean, I think that one of the greatest atrocities done to us as uh African diasporic people is this illusion of separation that is created by these borders, you know depending on the different places that we were, you know, our ancestors were placed, whether it be here, Caribbean, Latin America, Brazil. And I love the idea of artists as being shepherds towards uniting the Black diaspora. Yeah And it's so true. We cannot, you know, we, Brazil is like one of the first and foremost places, you know, that we have to go because there's so much history there. And there's a museum that I visited on Mestello Afro Brazil, created by the founder Emmanuel Arrujo, an artist who created the museum there in São Paulo. Yes And I mean, it's just that museum. Oh my gosh. I honestly, I feel like every Black person, if they can, need to make a trip just to go and visit that museum mmm-hmm, you know, because he tells the history, you know yeah, Brazil, the history is so complicated there, you know. I can't wait to talk to um Brazilian artists. That's something I'm really looking forward to doing in the near future mmm-hmm. But back to you. So, okay, so moving towards my last couple of questions for you mmm-hmm. So, you know, you are a student, a teacher, you know, an experimenter, uh a multidisciplinary like scholar. And so I was just wondering about um how do you see your multidisciplinary practice evolving in the future? Are there any disciplines or mediums that you're eager to explore? Um How do you envision continuing to push the boundaries of your artistic practice? Yeah, I appreciate this question because it's something I've been thinking about too. And my answer is



TV is the next frontier that I'm very interested in, in both my own writing work and creative work and also my teaching and research. I'm really interested in talking about Black women characters in TV, I'm very interested in talking about colorism as it affects Black women's representation in TV. I'm very interested in talking about how Black women, as I see it, and I'm very early in my thinking about this in a way. I mean, we've been seeing these kinds of narratives for for forever, but I'm interested in how in queer Black women characters' story arcs, they're often positioned as the dominant person in the dynamic, um the aggressor, the pursuer, even when that doesn't make narrative sense (laughs). And it's something that I keep seeing and I feel crazy when I see it over and over. And so I feel like it needs to be talked about. And so I've been thinking about, yeah, writing, trying to write an article about that and feeling like, you know, can I do that that when the rest of my research is so different, I'm thinking about Diasburg Film and Nigerian Women in Film and Nigerian Women Filmmakers in my dissertation.

- You absolutely can. You absolutely will. (laughs) - Right, oh, thank you. Yeah, so I would be super interested in writing about, yeah, Black women on TV and kind of thinking about these different questions. And then I'm really interested in writing for TV for kind of the same reasons. I would love to push back against some of the ways that I see Black women being written on TV with kind of my own take. And so even when I think about where I would like my film to go, said this a couple of times um in different spaces, I would actually love to adapt it as a TV show. Also because the the sociality around TV, the sociality that we have around TV, I think is so rich and like it's fertile ground for community, building community and enjoying each other as black audiences. Of course, you can see a film, you know um, many times, but there's something about sitting down in front of a TV show um over and over again, over time, and potentially, you know, gathering other people around you um, and discussing what happened and reacting as the show is on and talking again, it's these these post event conversations, it's talking about what happened in the episode later with, you know, other black women, that that practice is so satisfying to me and being able to create that experience, particularly for all of us. particularly for audiences of other Nigerian American men and women and other people with the characters that I um created in my film, giving these audiences the chance to engage with these characters over time mmm-hmm would be amazing, would be incredible. So those are a couple of my dreams at the moment. Uh I'm here for it and I can't wait. I just went through the whole like, I was so late and I just went through um Black-ish and I now it's like, I loved it so much mmm-hmm. I like, I want to start all over again. You really do develop this relationship with the characters and it could go on for years. So I think that's amazing and beautiful. mmm-hmm So my last question for you is, are there any specific lessons, experiences or advice that you feel have been particularly valuable to you. Mmm-hmm That would be also for other women artists on their creative journeys. I think about this a lot and I wish I could remember who told me this. Um It was definitely Black women, but someone told me, "Focus on what you want, not what you don't want, and create more of what you want, not more of what you don't want." And that really guides me in a lot of ways. Um in ways I don't even often acknowledge, I'm actually surprised that it's what's coming up in this moment. And there's other bits of advice I could share, but this is what's really speaking to me right now, what feels like it needs to come out. Because what that means is, rather than, for example, um only focusing on how negatively Black women are portrayed on TV, to speak to my last example or my last answer, it's important

to also just create more of the the representation that I want to see. It's not just criticizing, critiquing constantly, saying, like, this is wrong, and let's tear this show down because it's problematic, um or you know picking apart, focusing on, dwelling on, and picking apart what we don't want. It's also about creating more of what we want. And so in everything I do, I try not to just critique. I try not to center the negative. I try not to center, even in my own life, I try not to center, for example, racism. I try not to even center, yeah, I try not to center anti-blackness. Instead, I really try to think, okay, all of this is going on, all of this negative stuff is going on. Where's the good? Where can I find what I actually want to see? Where are the experiences I had where I was in joyful community with other black people? And how can I center those in my memory of this day where I also experienced racism? For example, as an example of a personal practice, and then when it comes to my work and research and writing and teaching and making films and curating, I'm always trying to acknowledge that the stuff we don't want is out there, but focus on creating, producing, sharing more of what we actually want and just centering what we actually want. 'Cause we can critique all day and complain all day about the stuff we don't want, but where do we finally get what we do want? - I think I needed to hear that today. So thank you (laughs). I definitely needed to hear that today 'cause it's definitely, it's a practice, 'cause it's hard, 'cause there's so much uh that we have to deal with and that bothers us mmm-hmm. But it's true, focusing on the joy and focusing on, because those are also very real and those are where we are actually being who we are. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. So this was so lovely yes. Thank you so much for your time today, Yifan. I'm just like, you know, this was an amazing um conversation. I just so excited to follow your journey now. (laughs) Thank you so much. I really appreciate this. Thank you for your questions. It was great to reflect and talk with you. And I'm glad we met. Thank you so much for this opportunity. Yes, yes. Now we're linked up mmm-hmm. So we're this together now. Right. You go and have a lovely day. And I am so excited about your your class this summer. Thank you And I just probably gonna reach out to you at the end of the summer just to see how it went. Please do But I know you're gonna have a blast. Your students are so lucky. Thank you so much. I really appreciate that. Thank you.