

The Root

Hey y'all. So this week, I'm gonna do something a little different. I wanted to kind of have like a, a reboot episode. If anybody knows me, oh my god, I'm so interested in like the refining process and refining and making things more clear and more clear and more clear. And so this episode, I am choosing to kind of like take a few steps back, introduce myself, and answer just a compilation of questions I have listed for myself, that'll kind of help guide the conversation. I first want to say, I'm not in my normal recording studio.

So, you know, baby girl Cyrah She is back in her hometown in Dayton, Ohio. And I kind of live on a busy street so you might hear the occasional car driving past horn you know, I live hood adjacent. So the the sound possibilities are endless. Yes, so with that being said, let's get into it.

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Welcome to the black box news.

I'm Cyrah Ward.

...

(Theme music plays)

“Your piercing gaze.

Makes my blood boil.

I feel so out of place.

I'll topple your scale finally awake.

I will escape your judgement day...”

.....

So the first thing I want to do is introduce myself more informally. So my name is Cyrah Ward. However, my artistic like alias is Enthroned One. Fun fact Cyrah actually means Enthroned One. So it's not just a name that I made up for myself.

I'm actually a performing artists, believe it or not an active performing artists. I'm a dancer. And as I started dancing around, like high school age ish, I ended up going to Ohio State University for dance. And now I have somehow found myself as a dance MFA candidate at the University of Maryland, after spending some time in New York, which is really lit.

Which really brings me to kind of what is The Black box umm, and The Black Box News as they're sort of two separate entities but all underneath one umbrella. So The Black Box itself is a creative platform, right for dance work. Because I'm an active performing artists, I actually created The Black Box creative series, before I knew that I was even going to make a podcast. So within that umbrella or side of, you know, this creative platform, I actually am actively producing work to add to that portfolio, which can also be found on my website as well. In addition to that, I've also been building what I call my O.B.A. platform, or out of box artists platform, or only black artists platform. badoom chhhh

I'm weak, I cracked myself up yall, um, but yes, I've been building that where I'm really interested in interviewing artists to just hear about their work, and create space and share space with artists to really share, just like what they do, why they do how they do it. I learned so much about just hearing folks speak about their creative processes. And so I'm really interested in

making that space. I have so many things I'd love to do with that side of The Black Box that I hope to begin to tap into this year.

So The Black Box News specifically is rooted in questioning box like thinking through a black cultural lens. During my time with the company, Urban Bush Woman that I performed with for a little bit. I remember being in these undoing racism workshops with I'm going to remember the name of their workshop soon. Oh, it'll come to me. It'll come to me. If it doesn't. I'll put it in my description to give him a little credit, some shout outs. People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. Okay, honey, listen.

So they do these undoing racism workshops. And they had this like exercise that we were supposed to do where they had a box, we had like, made a box up of all these dots, and you were supposed to put your pin to the paper. And you were supposed to connect every dot within that box without lifting your pen from the paper. And most folks, unless you've been trained by them already, most folks get confused, hardly ever start to even try to put their pen to paper because they don't want to mess up or find themselves like scribbling all over the paper and making a 1000s of boxes, that's me. And the though a small exercise, it was pushing us to understand how the world has assimilated our minds, so much so that we either refuse to try and bust the box, or we do our best and tire ourselves out from trying. And ever since that moment, I was just like, damn, like I really, I really, without even knowing it assimilated in a way that I might not have even consented to had I known that box was there. Yeah? And so I was like, damn, I should, you know, go on this journey of trying to bust the box. And you know, you never really understand what the box is until somebody kind of gives you language to that. And so, growing up, I, I first kind of became interested and being like, an advocate of like, acknowledging that certain things happening around me was because of race. And it's so funny, because my parents used to always be like, you know, Cyrah, everything doesn't have to be about race. Maybe it's not that maybe it's another thing. And it really pushed me to silence my voice. In many ways, not just them. But just in general, I was talking about race in high school, my senior year of high school, the first piece I ever made was called Endangered Species, where I spoke about or spoke out against the Trayvon Martin case, which was a big thing in that time of my life.

And I was like, FUCK, like, I'm not about to sit here and allow my people to have their voices silenced. So I'm going to put it on a stage and I'm going to force you to be uncomfortable or force you to be feel seen in this space, no matter how uncomfortable that might feel. Because, you know, when you're talking about race and mixed company, there's a, there's always going to be a part of our genetic makeup, our being Black people that wants to make the other folks around us feel more comfortable, even though we're the ones who should be at the forefront of the conversation in the forefront of you know, being cared for. And so, I, I kept being told, like, yo, see Cyrah, everything's not about race.

You know, you're doing too much like this, that and the third and so I honestly stopped completely talking about race verbally. And I had completely shunned it to just being in my creative process as a choreographer and as a dancer and as a performer. And if you talk if you talk with anybody who's been in my creative processes, or have performed my works, I very heavily speak about race behind closed doors, but I often don't speak about it, you know, in mixed company in front of people, it's, there's a level of boldness and certainty that that takes that I had not graduated to did not know how to navigate in those times of my life and my upbringing.

Then dancing with Urban Bush Women, I always joked like Urban Bush Women paid me to speak about race to racebate. And I love them for it. Because it wasn't until like, being in these undoing racism workshops in mixed company where you had in order to get the fullness out of your experience, you had to be okay with making white people uncomfortable. You had to be okay with making, you know, black folks who have assimilated to wanting to uphold the the mammy auras around blackness in general of making white people feel comfortable uncomfot like you had to make that uncomfortable. Like there was a lot of undoing just in the talking about race.

And so, in that I was like, wow. This feels powerful. This feels like something I could tap into this feels like something I should tap into. And it wasn't until I realized that touring. And you know, being a part of a company wasn't necessarily what my body could upkeep with cuz child listen, honey. I got old lady body y'all okay? Touring, Dancing is hard. Choreographing is, is, is Whoa, yeah. It's it's an interesting journey. And so I'm like, Hmm, how, especially with a pandemic? I'm like, so I've slowed down, my body isn't doing the things they used to do. How do I still continue to do that work that I that I do on stage that I place on stage? How do I continue to do that outside of a stage setting. And then also to be very clear, there's a sort of like gatekeeping, that proscenium stage, or traditional theaters, kind of instill or upkeep? Because, you know, there are a lot of people that know that I'm a performer who could never make it to my performances could never pay for performance, couldn't make it to this stage. And so I'm like, yo, how do I open up that gate to the knowledge that I've learned over these years? And I'm still learning?

And so I was like, Oh, well, let's make a podcast. And let me tell yall, I used to have another business, my business was Enthroned One Apparel. I had a clothing line that was really dedicated to just like empowering the Black subconscious. And I was in the midst of closing that down. I'm like, the pandemic was rough. I wanted to relaunch during that time then I was like, this doesn't feel like where I should be. And so I was sitting in the living room of my home downstairs, y'all. And the Lord was like, oh, make a podcast, the work that you're doing on stage needs to be talked about the work that you're doing in your everyday life in your everyday relationships with people that deserves a space, and you deserve a space to exercise that language. And so I came up with The Black Box News.

And I know the word news can be like, Huh, why? Why that word? Why not just the black box? Why not? I don't know, the black box podcast, or you know, so many things that could be around naming. First of all, I love naming things. But something that really sat with me was this fact that the word news literally just defined means information not previously known. And something I found in speaking to a lot of my peers, you know, because being literate, and articulate and how to vocalize, you know, the ever present, you know, space of racism, things prejudice, like, you know, you don't know what's happening until you know, and when you know, you know, like, all it takes is somebody giving you that key and saying, This is why you've been feeling this way. This is what this can conjure up in your system. Actually, that wasn't right. Actually, that emotion you felt over here in this situation, when that person did this, you were valid. You know, that validation for me, is something that I'm really, that validation is something I'm really interested in. And that kind of gifting of language and insights, new perspectives is what I'm

interested in. So that's where the word news comes from, as news literally just means information I previously known.

Yeah, that feels good.

Let's see. Oh, okay. So the next is why then and why now? And I kind of tapped into this a little bit. But I after realizing, oh, like, hey, Cyrah, use a Black woman. You is black child. You belong to this heritage, these people this struggle, this journey, this resilience, this liberation or journey, like all of these things. I was like, damn, I actually had been silencing all of my opinions around this thing, right. Like I said, I shunned my language straight to the stage. And so The Black Box News Podcast really feels like a way for me to further exercise this, this language, and applying it to everyday happenings, which I honestly do, I do under the table quite often with like minded individuals, because you know, as a Black woman, you don't get the amount of release that we are really due.

We're always in a place of filtering. Kind of like, oh, sugar coating our words to I don't know make other people feel comfortable. And that's, that's also something I'm really trying to get out of. Like, there's a way— I've always learned from my father, you can say anything you want to say, as long as you know, you, you say it in a way that is receivable.

And so that's what I'm really interested in doing for myself. And also, just exercising my voice as a Black woman period feels very radical, feels like a journey to liberation that I'm interested in. And that, quite frankly, is really necessary for you know, what I'm called to be doing. Which, you know, callings change all the time, right. But what I'm very clear about is my passion about race. And, and how my blackness is seen by the world, how I view my blackness. How I choose not to view my blackness, right? There's so many things that could go into that.

So, overall, I feel like this podcast, The Black Box News, and overall, The Black Box creative series creative platform is just really interested in encouraging folks to question. My dad uhh... My dad used to do these things where he would say, hey, Siri, did you know this? Or did you know this word meant this or he'd give me a fact? And then he he'd paused and looked at me and be like, so did you believe what I said? And I'm like, Well, what do you mean did I believe what you said, you as my father, you won't tell me some wrong information. He said, But you didn't look it up. You didn't fact check me? You didn't question me. You didn't. You just took what the hell I said and ran with it. And I'm like, What am I supposed to right? You're a trusted figure in my life. Why would you tell me wrong information? He said, That's not the point. The point is, you should never take something somebody does or says for face value without finding out how you feel about him finding out do you agree with that opinion with that fact? It doesn't matter what it is, it could be very much so true. But how would you know unless you found it out? And so that The Black Box News Podcast feels like that? Well, actually, no, I don't agree with that. And this is why, or yes, I do agree with that. And I look that thing up. And this feels important for me to share. And this feels important for me to store away in my system.

And so that that's really also where this, this podcast is stemming from. It's just wanting to push people to question things like that... that's all research is that's all theorizing, any happenings or

events is it's just questioning. So I'm really interested in that. And another thing that I really hope to gain is just new ways of understanding how to build community.

This idea of community organizing is something that's been sitting in my spirit for a while. And it's also been something I've only really had access to, through the lens of dance. And so using language in this way to build community feels foreign in a sense, right? Because, I mean, if you know me, I'm always in a place of finding the right words, being very clear and intentional about what I'm saying how people receive it, what my intent versus my impact is, but you know, that's in my kitchen child that's in my kitchen. And I'm like, so how can I use these things that I'm already doing to further my, my creative practice? further my intellectual practice. And so this really feels like the thing to do right now, in this moment, and actually, for many moments to come.

I'm, I'm so excited for this journey. We'll see child, I really, I'm really a big storyteller. I really identify as a griot at heart. I'm very animated. So we'll see if I'd be more conversational pieces. I'm interested in it. But yall I also love my PSA. So you know, I might have to, you know, dabble in both of them. But yeah, thank you for joining me on this journey. Thank you for witnessing me in my fullness. I'm so excited to grow and I'm so excited for this journey of becoming yeah... Now I want you to ask yourself...

Have you checked outside the box?

...

(Theme music plays)

“Cause I’m not hidin anymore.
See I have got a reason to be.”

...

Thank you so much for listening. Our vibes is a song called The Table provided by April+Vista. You can catch playback of this episode, past episodes and all others to come by visiting EnthronedOne.com the black box.

I'm Cyrah Ward.

Activist. Black Woman. Griot.

Y'all stay blessed now.

...

(Theme music plays)

“When company, comes knockin’
One things for sure
There is nothing you can do to starve my soul
Oh Oh No...

And though you keep me
From The Table
When Company Comes knockin’
One things for sure
There is nothing you can do to starve my soul

To starve my soul”

(music fade out)