

PROFESSIONAL  
**TROUBLEMAKER**



with **LUVVIE AJAYI JONES**

## Professional Troublemaker with Luvvie Ajayi Jones

Take Your Shot (with Jessica O. Matthews) - Episode 02

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Welcome to the Professional Troublemaker podcast! This is the place where we help you cultivate the courage, authenticity and audacity you need to use your voice, take up space and live a life that is so bold, even your wildest dreams say #goals. I'm your host, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, New York Times bestselling author, sought after speaker and side-eye sorceress bringing you thought-provoking conversations with amazing people who have taken action, and have consistently showed up with the courage and confidence they needed to become the fear-fighters they are today. Like the late, great John Lewis said, these are the kind of people who are "Never, ever afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

Before we jump into today's interview, know that this podcast is named after my second book, [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#), which hits bookstore shelves on March 2, 2021.

How would our lives be different if we were given permission to be disruptors for the greater good? How far will we have gone if we already knew that our jobs aren't to shy away from big things but to run towards them? How dope would our legacy be if we knew that FEAR is natural and we're actually supposed to do the things that scare us? How audacious would we be if impostor syndrome wasn't holding on to our ankles? In my new book, I talk about all these things and how my life has transformed as a result of being the person who committed to doing the things that feel bigger than me, doing the things that feel scary as shit and things that make me lose my breath.

This book is dedicated to my late grandmother, Funmilayo Faloyin, who was the professional troublemaker I looked up to when I was growing up. You know what you can say to an elderly Nigerian stateswoman who has been through the darkness of life and conquered all the mountains placed in her way? Not a damn thing. That spirit, those lessons and that fortitude is the energy I brought to this book. So you know it's anointed!

**The Fear-Fighter Manual** is game-changing, and I know it. So, if you value this show, if you value the guests and their stories, the lessons, the wisdom and inspiration I bring to you. If you've ever listened to something I said and wrote it down, YOU WILL LOVE [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#). If you want to commit to fighting fear, impostor syndrome and constantly finding courage in this scary world, this book is for you.

So, I need your help. I need you to help make this book a rousing success. I need you like I needed you for my first book [I'm Judging You: The Do-Better Manual](#). Y'all helped me change my life by supporting it, and making it a New York Times bestseller. And I need your help to do that again. Because this book

is needed and I think it will leave a mark on you. I know it, actually. We need to become professional troublemakers, and this manual that I wrote, this book that I wrote will help make it happen. So, be sure to preorder **Professional Troublemaker** TODAY wherever books are sold, or go to [ProfessionalTroublemakerBook.com](https://ProfessionalTroublemakerBook.com). You can get the hardcover, paperback or audiobook (which I narrated). So the URL is [PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com](https://PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com). I'm so excited for you to read it.

Today, I'm talking to my Naija Voltron Squad sister **Jessica O. Matthews**. Here's why Jessica is a Professional Troublemaker and someone I wanted to make sure I talked to on this podcast. First, Jessica might be the most brilliant human being I know. She's got two degrees from Harvard, she's been on the cover of Forbes twice, she's been named Harvard Scientist of the Year. But instead of just resting on her brilliant overachieving accomplishments, she's taken that brilliance and used it for the good of others. At the age of 19, Jessica invented the SOCKET ball, an energy generating soccer ball that provides off-grid power for the developing world. At the age of 22, she founded Uncharted Power (her company that was previously called Uncharted Play), a global full-service power technology company that builds, owns, and operates renewable power infrastructure in Africa and the United States. She's someone who is a problem solver at her core and absolutely unwilling to accept the status quo. She refuses to let people suffer or live a life that is less than if there is a way to solve that problem.

During our conversation, we talk about what pushed her to start down this path of working to revolutionize energy and infrastructure, why she considers God to be her biggest inventor in her life and career, and why Black women will save the world if they'll step up and start taking the risks they need to take in this world.

And as a programming note – we recorded this conversation before the 2020 election, so you'll hear some of those references in this interview. Let's jump in. It's a good one.

## Conversation with Jessica O. Matthews

LUVVIE Do you remember the first time we met?

JESSICA Yes. Well, the first, first time we met was at Oprah's SuperSoul.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA It was Oprah's SuperSoul. And we were like, "All right, dope, dope." And then the time we really, really got to connect was AfroTech 2016.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA And I think you sat in the audience... I think you saw me speak. I don't know, right?

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA And you were like, "This girl is the lovey of energy."

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA I was out there just like Def Jam Comedy special, just out here saying all this wild shit, tight pants, ikebe and all.

LUVVIE With the Ralph Lauren blazer.

JESSICA With the Ralph Lauren... Listen, I brought some of the blazers [inaudible 00:08:16].

LUVVIE Actually I was like, "I see her. That's me, if I was in energy."

JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE I was like, "We got to be friends, G. Because I see her." I was in the back like, "Oh, we got to meet. I'm about this. I'm all over in this." Since then that's my boo thang.

JESSICA Yo, if you had told me four years later, that we'd be... I would've gotten way more lit that weekend. I would have been like, "Y'all count down to the darkness."

LUVVIE To the darkness. Okay. The dark realm. We have found ourselves in some interesting times.

JESSICA And in testing times.

LUVVIE Oh my gosh. So I always get started by asking people, what did you want to be when you were growing up?

JESSICA Ooh. When I was really young, like every good Nigerian child, I wanted to be a doctor.

LUVVIE Of course.

JESSICA But then I was like, "Blood? First of all, I got shaky hands, so that seems. I was just like, "Hmm, I don't know if it should be me." And then I was like, "I'm not really feeling this blood stuff. I don't like gore. I was like, "How exactly am I expecting to be an effective doctor?" Then I knew I loved to invent though. My whole thing is that like, I'm trying to be like the love child of Beyonce and Bill Nye the science guy, in everything I'm doing. So I knew I wanted to be an inventor. I knew I loved tinkering and doing all that stuff. So first I thought, "How do you operationalize that in a career?" I thought, "Oh, a science, doctor." Then I looked at biomedical engineering for a little bit, a quick bit. By college, gosh, no by high school, I think is when I was like, "Oh, probably some sort of lawyer." I got really into psychology.

LUVVIE Okay. We literally are the same because you know my major was my psychology in college.

JESSICA Yeah. I got into psychology in college. I was like, "What am I going to do?" And then senior year, when it was time to choose majors, I was just like, I was going between sociology and psychology, sociology and psychology. And there were enough things that happened, to my

family especially, where... And you know this... Half the battle for everybody, but especially Nigerians, especially anybody I think in the developing world is right up here.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA And I started to see that a lot of the things that I thought were wrong with the world were very much based on how people perceive their world and how people then decided to organize themselves in their world. And so, for me, I actually got into what I do right now. Not because I was obsessed with energy, but more because I was really obsessed with the concept of self-actualization and living a life that when you did reach your last day, you had no real regrets. And I felt like the way to be successful in that was to study psychology. So I got a degree in psych. And again, I knew it would be applied psychology, but ended up falling into entrepreneurship. And once you're in it you're ruined for everything else. I can't work for anybody else. It would be a disaster.

LUVVIE Whoa. I would get fired so fast-

JESSICA Oh. I wouldn't come to shit. I won't come to work. I'll be, "Oh, I won't do shit." I'd be the worst employee possible. So that's it.

LUVVIE Okay. So how was your family encouraging you when you were saying, "Hey, I want to do this thing. I want to do this." Because again, to the point of it all, a lot of us are failed doctors, a lot. So many people that I've talked to are like, "Yeah, I wanted to be a doctor at first." So many of us. I don't think I've actually talked to one doctor on this podcast, but there's probably been at least 30 people who've been like, "Yeah, I wanted to be a doctor."

JESSICA Because what it takes to actually go through with it, I don't know... A lot of doctors come out... Listen, I appreciate you. But they had to go through a lot. They had to go through a lot. How did my family... So, I had the luck of having an older sister who did wilder shit. You know what I mean? So Tiana went to Harvard before me. She's two years older than me. Tiana told my dad that she was getting a degree in economics all four years through when she was actually getting a degree in visual and environmental studies, which is film. Graduation day comes, they say Tiana Ehinume, they didn't even know how to pronounce her middle name, but Tiana Ehinume Idonni Matthews, visual and environmental studies. My dad goes, "Ah. Eh." Especially because the whole time she was like, "I need books. Oh, these economics books are so expensive, they're so expensive. I need money for economics books." So she graduates.

So at graduation day, my dad doesn't even get out of the car. He just drives away. So now you have the Nigerian daughter who is doing film, that's the juxtaposition. So I come and I was like, "You know what dad? I'll add a minor in economics. Don't worry." And then I was like, "Hey, well I had already invented something at the age of like 19." So I invented, when I was 19, this energy generating soccer ball. It would harness the energy from play and store that power inside the ball. So I already had this invention when I was 19, added economics, by senior year I applied to Harvard business school and got in and deferred for two years. So I was able to spend two years. I went to go work for a startup while I was working on my startup. But I had created... It really wasn't a risk. It was like this safe space kind of thing. And within six months of me graduating, I

was on stage with Bill Clinton. So I didn't really have that much pushback, because I had like a lot of validation. I was lucky.

LUVVIE See, we got to go back. Because-

JESSICA I know, I just said a lot.

LUVVIE Jess just dropped about seven life flexes, [crosstalk 00:13:59] Who the hell again? You want to talk about excellence. At 19, I'd already done this and I'm [crosstalk 00:14:10] it's whatever. No, Jess. No, ma'am. I'm going to slow you down a little bit. And bring us way back because you just said seven things that made my head explode. I'm just like, "What?" Okay. First of all, your sister told your parents that she was doing economics and basically got a film degree.

JESSICA Yeah. Well, my sister told everybody, but my dad. My dad is always the last to find out everything. Mostly because he can't handle it. He can't handle... I remember when she got a belly button ring, everybody knew and then something happened in high school, Tiana's going to be like, "Why are you spending this time talking about me?" And she got sick and she had to go to the emergency. And my dad saw it and saw the belly button ring. He was just like, "Florence, what is this? What, are you handing out condoms to?" And my mom stays playing dumb like, "What? Huh? I don't know she did this." Yes, you did. Mom, you took her to that shit. So he never knows what's popping. But yeah, she dropped it on him that day.

LUVVIE Now take us back to the fact that your major psychology, what made you invent a soccer ball at 19? You're in college, in undergrad and you're just sitting in your dorm one day and said, "Let me invent something."

JESSICA No. So I wish it was... Actually, no, I'm happy that it wasn't that easy, because I told the quick gloss, everything was amazing story, but we all have to have our moments where we fall and our moments where we're like, "Ooh." You know when you either touch the stove and you get close enough to be like "I'm not doing this." So, I had a pretty straightforward way of going through high school. I did well at sports, I did well at school, I ran clubs, whatever. And so I came into college one, not really knowing how much of a goal oriented person I am, not really acknowledging that I would need a new strategy for success.

This is actually a theme in my life, I made the mistake of coming into Harvard and thinking there's no way I'm ever going to be academically competitive. Oh, these people are all so smart. They all went to these fancy academies. I just went to this school in upstate New York. So, I didn't even think about academics. I didn't think about what I wanted to accomplish and get out of my time at Harvard. The goal was just to get into Harvard. And once I got in there, I didn't really know what to do with myself. And I had thought that I had all my shit together. Not knowing that actually I was living in my mom's house with all her damn rules that made my shit make sense.

So I'm out there way too close to CVS, just eating all the candy I want, because I love candy. And not making no damn sense. Because I lost all this structure that I had. And my freshman year was a mess. I think I ended it with like a 2.5 GPA. I was asked to leave for a bit of time, Harvard. And it was not good. So I'm waitressing over the summer, and the first quarter of sophomore

year, trying to get my mom to look at me in a way that doesn't look like... I would've rather gone to prison, the disappointment that I've ever seen in her face because I just totally fucked up. And so I had to work. I had to work, convince them to let me back in the second semester of sophomore year. And my mom said, "Oseth, you better graduate on time." So I was like, "All right, I'mma stack these degrees. So I should act these classes."

But when I came back in, everything was different. So I told myself, "Okay. One, you have got to be very clear about what you are trying to accomplish and have incredible intention with everything you do." So there are a couple of things I started to do. One, I started to create a daily checklist of things that I want to accomplish that was always longer than what I could feasibly accomplish in one day because I never wanted to get satisfied with myself. Two, I told myself that anything I did, the standard wouldn't be how I thought I would do compared to everyone else, but whether or not I would finish this feeling good about the work I put in and feeling good about how it resulted. And so there were still some hiccups going through, but I ended up graduating with a cumulative GPA, 3.7. So I basically got all A's from then on.

LUVVIE Jesus.

JESSICA I ended up being at the top of a few of the classes that I thought, "Oh, how could that even be possible?" I ended up seeing this class, that was called idea translation; effecting change through art and science, in my sophomore year. And it looked like a cool way to get some money from the school to try out cool ideas. And I always love to invent growing up. And it was like, "This seems interesting. Let's see where it'll take me." And so I took the class and of course, if I'm in this class, I'mma try to get an A. Because I need to get an A, because my shit was wild. And so I brought my full self there.

And there was a problem, there needed to be an idea and a solution that could blend art and science to solve a problem. I thought about Nigeria. I thought about power. I thought about the psychology of how people have just decided that this is the status quo. At least back then, this is just kind of what the world should be. And I thought I wanted to create a psychological innovation more than anything else. At the time I knew the problem was infrastructural, classic Jess. I was like, "Ooh, that's too big. That's too scary to actually address, but maybe I can address the psychological problem of my own cousins who are engineers themselves, who can't imagine a world where there's a better solution for how we get the sustainable infrastructure we need." And so that's what led to an invention of a soccer ball that can generate energy.

LUVVIE So, okay. Walk me through that. What even got you the idea of like, "Okay, I think I'll use a soccer ball."

JESSICA Okay. Well what's the most popular sport that we see everybody playing in Nigeria, whether they have a ball or not, whether they're good at it or not?

LUVVIE Soccer.

JESSICA What's the one thing that usually Nigerians are just like, "Well, it is what it is. It is what it is. It is what it is." About the way the world is around them. For their own personal thing, they believe in the stars. The bananas leaf sweeper will think he can be president and something could

happen. But usually everything is, it is what it is. But when you see people actually on the pitch and they're playing, that's when you see the real braggadocious like, "Oh, I'm going to show you, I can do this."

LUVVIE Yes.

JESSICA So for me, it was being there over the summer, seeing that, being like, "This is dope." It was actually a two part thing, I would say. One was; I was there for my aunt's wedding, 17 years old, same thing, you see everyone's playing, it's cool. We lose power. It's expected, yada yada. And I remember very specifically the fumes being so bad that one time, that I started to complain and my cousin said, "Don't worry, you'll get used to it." And I thought that was bullshit. And I was like, "Bro, this doesn't feel like something people should get used to." And I remember juxtaposing that in my mind to when they were playing with, it wasn't even a soccer ball, but whatever they were playing with at the time and seeing them have that kind of passion and excitement and thinking, it's almost like two different people in two different worlds, and that needs to be brought together. But I didn't necessarily have any thought there then.

But then when we came back to the States, that year was a tough year, especially for my mom. She lost her sister, who was younger than I am now. She lost her brother-in-law and she lost her father, all in one year. And I remember thinking like, "Damn life is... Death is just so real." And there's nothing you can do to get rid of that. But I have this urge to try to solve problems. I truly, I kind of take pride in the concept of being a world class problem solver, and always trying to find a way through. And so it broke my heart that my family, the members who had passed away likely passed away believing what my cousins believed that most of the problems that you should just get used to it.

And so that was what kind of gave me the push. I like to say, innovation lives between a rock and a hard place. And so for me, the rock was actually just this overall experience at my aunt's wedding and seeing that, but the hard place that actually pushed me to do something and really start to be very focused on that, was these members of my family passing away. That's what gave me the urgency. And then the focus and the structure came from this class. I knew I had to get an A, it was a group project, but I got the A, everyone else did not. Because I was like, "Well, this is what we going to do. Let's organize it." And we locked ourselves in a room and I was like, "We got to come up with something that's going to wow the professor." And I think someone was throwing around a ball. And I was like, "All right, well, how about this? Why don't we do this?" They gave us a prompt, a massively multiplayer game.

None of us played video games. We thought that was dumb. We're like soccer, it's a massively multiplayer game. And it's like, "Okay, problem. I know this is a direct problem." The other girls had some time overseas too. And they're like, "Yeah, we've seen this." And I was like, "I know that this specific thing will unlock a world for people."

LUVVIE Because Nigeria, for those who don't know, Nigeria has an energy problem. Where light will go, it would be a blackout, except it's not an exception, it's like the rule. People are expecting that any moment you might end up in the dark and you don't know when the light will come back on-

JESSICA Multiple times a day.

LUVVIE Multiple times a day. You might be out of light for three days for no reason. And Nigeria being such a oil rich country that is not poor, most people are poor, but that's a separate issue. Nigeria having that problem is massively ridiculous. It is just such a quality of life problem. But it's something that people are just like, "It is what it is." For such a long time. So that's what Jess is talking about. So all right, you came up with the idea to use a soccer ball, to harness energy.

JESSICA Yeah. That was it. And it was never to like solve all the world's problems. It was just like, we got to break the way people think. It was always meant to be a psychological innovation. So that's where I go back to my degree in psychology. It's like, "Anyone can create a thing, but only some people can create something that will change how people think and will change how people view the world." And I felt like that was the way I could make the biggest impact. If you can inspire enough people to believe that things can be different, and to believe that they can play a role in the way things are different, to me, that's the best chance of things actually being different. It's like recruiting people. And so it was designed to be a recruitment tool, designed to be at first as a class project. What ended up happening over the course of, what's been now 33, I'm going to be 33 next year. So about 13, 14 years, I think it was most effective as a recruitment tool for me because I had no interest in engaging in energy.

And right now, I'm at the helm of an award-winning sustainable infrastructure company, with people on the team whose careers started a year after I was born. And it's because like, gosh, well one, I have an acronym that I say, I say that, luck is laboring under correct knowledge. So I felt lucky when I had this idea with the socket and it really caught people, people were into it. And so I was like, "I don't know when I'm going to be lucky again. I don't know what's going to be a lucky idea. So let me see what I can do with this." And so I kept on investing my time and my thoughts and my intention and to pushing and seeing where this would go. And I never got overly distracted by the glitz. There was some people who just wanted me to make one billion soccer balls and I was like, "But that's not actually going to solve the problem. That's just going to be one billion soccer balls everywhere."

Some people wanted me to do this and do that. And I kept on pushing and pushing forward and getting more and more into this world of like, why is it that a rich country like Nigeria, why is this the problem? Why is it that in 2020... Let's look at this from a global perspective. Even in the US in 2020, we have natural disasters that are wreaking havoc on our entire planet at an exponential rate. We have millions of kids who lack basic access to broadband internet to go to school. We have cities that are facing unprecedented budget deficits, so they cannot provide the services that you needed even before COVID, let alone with COVID. We have marginalized groups feeling even more left behind. All of this in a world where we all keep talking about hovercrafts and AI and 5G, the fuck? What are we talking about? Why is it that we have all of these technologies and we still have the world that we live in?

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA And it took me over a decade to figure out why. And once we figured it out, me and the team we were like, "All right, bet. This is what we're going to work on fixing." And it started because of power. I would say that we would not be where we are, if I wasn't coming from the perspective of being a Nigerian-American, who knew that power infrastructure was not good



enough, we wouldn't be where we are. Every single other company, every other founder, every other CEO, even the Jeff Bezos' and the Elon Musks of the world, whoever's in this game. They all were operating from the perspective where power works when you flip the switch and it goes on. So they built technology on top of an archaic system around power. I was operating from the perspective of knowing that it does not scale, it does not work. And so we built from a layer below. And now, as far as I'm concerned, we're designing, cost-effective, smart, sustainable communities that they could only dream of doing.

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Imagine being in an online space where people's foolishness doesn't make you want to fight the air. That might sound impossible with your current choices for social media, but I was sick of wading through nonsense to find like-minded people, so I created my own online community. And if you are the kind of person who is striving to be a professional troublemaker and fight fear, we need you to join us in that community, because you need people to cheer you on.

[LuvvNation](#) is my online community and app that is a safe space in a dumpster fire world. It's the place for the most thoughtful, funny, most chill deficient people on these interwebs. We're a community that comes together to make each other better with curated conversations, opportunities to connect, and challenges to help us transform and do better in every area of our lives. So, I want you to come in there, join us. Become a citizen of LuvvNation. So go to [luvvnation.com](http://luvvnation.com), that's [luvvnation.com](http://luvvnation.com) L-U-V-V-N-A-T-I-O-N. Download the app in the App Store or on Android, it's on iOS and Android and come on through! All right. Back to the podcast.

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LUVVIE            So you created the soccer ball in this classroom.

JESSICA          Yeah.

LUVVIE            Got your psych degree.

JESSICA          Yeah.

LUVVIE            How did you now end up on that stage with Bill Clinton? How did you now end up building the company?

JESSICA          Yeah. Oh man, let's take this back.

LUVVIE            Yeah, take us back.

JESSICA          So, had gotten in, so applied senior year, not junior year, applied senior year. I actually thought I was going to try to do my JD MBA.

LUVVIE            Okay.

JESSICA Again, classic Nigerian, just collecting degrees as necessarily possible, collecting degrees.

LUVVIE [inaudible 00:29:48].

JESSICA Started studying for the LSATs and was like, "This shit's hard. This shit seems unnecessarily hard." Took a practice test was like, "We're going to require a lot of work to get the score I want to get. I don't really know." And then I was like, "I don't feel like doing this right now." Signed up for the GMATs, studied for a week, took the GMATs, got a great score and was like, 'All right, this is fine. I don't care.'" So tip number one, take the GMATs, LSATs are not... They're too hard for no good... Not necessary. So took GMATs got in and I was like, "All right." So I got a little bit of a period to kind of experiment with some stuff.

LUVVIE You got to Harvard Business School?

JESSICA Harvard Business School, yeah. Went to go and work for a startup. I was the first female hire, one of the first 10 people hired for this company. And, it was funny, we were still working... Some of the girls from the group class, even though that started to fall apart very quickly because there were just... It's a group project, so there are some people who are just showing up and you're just like, "Why is this person in here?" But so we had applied for a grant and had gotten it through the Clinton Foundation. And as part of that, we were invited to be on stage with him and the co-founder of YouTube and two people from his cabinet. The Clinton Global Institute, I think. And I was like, "Alright, that's dope." I think it was April of 2011.

LUVVIE Okay.

JESSICA And I was still working for this other company, and two things happened. One; just in working for this startup and seeing what was going on, I was able to learn a lot about how startups work and see that it's not really about the age that you are to say that you will definitely be successful in starting our company. I saw the CEO of that company, and he had done some things before, and I saw what he was doing, but I also saw mistakes he was making. And it wasn't about not making mistakes, it was about realizing that no matter what you do, you will make mistakes when you launch your own venture. So then I asked myself, I said, "It would be a lot cuter if I make these mistakes in my 20s and in my 30s." I was like, "Oh. I already know that he's not looking at cute at 35 right now making these mistakes. But me at 23 will be hella cute. Oopsies."

So I was like, "Okay. I feel like, why am I waiting so long? Let me just jump in." Go on this stage with Bill Clinton, it was this dope experience. I'm like, "Wow. Look where I am. These are really legit people." And he said the nicest stuff about me, dead ass, the Clinton's have always been such a supporter of mine that I'm just like, him and Hillary and Chelsea. And I'm just, "Oh." When 2016 happened, I could have had a cabinet position y'all-

LUVVIE [inaudible 00:32:47] energy, shit.

JESSICA Yo. And I'm just like, "Damn." But he just said the nicest things, I think a white man has ever said about a Black woman and her brain and her intellect. He said, "If ever there was an innovator, she's it."

LUVVIE Wow.

JESSICA He said, on stage, publicly. That's why I'm just like, "Y'all need to..." He didn't have to say these things. He didn't have to invite me. He didn't have to do... And there was another Black woman, in his cabinet, some head of science lady that was there on that stage too. And when he said these things and he asked me, he's like, "So what's next?" I didn't have the guts to tell him that it was only my part-time gig. And I was like, "Alright." And I said some stuff, came back and I was like, "Y'all Bill Clinton believes in me. So, this is my two weeks notice. Bye. I got to go." So by May, that was in April, by May, I was full-time.

LUVVIE How does one get started? Create an energy company.

JESSICA One day at a time, one hour at a time. I like to say, the trick to thinking big is to think small. Especially when you don't really know where something's going to go. And I think that we often think that we have to have a full plan fully baked out before we can launch something, but that's not how life works. And sometimes these ventures... Think about you, right? You didn't sit down one day and say, "Okay, I'm going to stop doing this because first I'm going to write this book and then I'm going to do this. And then I'm going to write this book. And then this is going to happen." If you had tried to do that, you would have still been sitting there, jotting out... You would be beautiful mind and shit on the wall like some crazy... That'd be it.

JESSICA So sometimes you're like, "All right, I have an opportunity right now, where..." Bill Clinton is not a dumb person. And he seems to think this is dope. That's enough of a reason to give this a shot and worst case scenario. I got business school. So I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I made so many mistakes, you wouldn't even believe it. But let's go, let's see, let's run with it. And I didn't even have a vision beyond just trying to make the soccer ball real. Now we're about to break ground in an actual city to transform the sidewalks and roads into a platform for all of the infrastructure communities need at no cost to the city. That's what I'm doing now. And back then, I was just trying to make a soccer ball makes sense. I was just trying to figure out supply chain. That was before I went to Shen Zen and everybody thought I was Serena Williams. And I had to like... That was before everything. I did not know what I didn't know, but I knew that if I didn't take this opportunity, I would regret it.

So you Google a lot. Man, I have a PhD in Google. I should own Google. You Google like crazy and you get comfortable being uncomfortable and you just go a little easy on yourself when you make the mistakes that you're going to make. And hopefully you don't make any mistakes you can't come back from. You will get sued. You will need a lawyer. You will find that the lawyer that you didn't pay, that the lawyer that you got because you were broke will not be a good enough lawyer for the things you need to do. You will need-

LUVVIE It's trial and error, because a lot of times people are so afraid. And to your point, I love that idea of you to think small, to think big. Because yeah, people always want to have the full strategy. How am I going to get there? Sometimes you don't got the map to the promised land, you just got to trust that-

JESSICA Especially Black women. We want to have the full map because we have so many responsibilities. White men do not. White men haven't thought it through from A to C, let alone

D E F G. We over here with Z, Z2, Z4. And we miss our chances a lot, because we're not just in it. And it's hard though. You do have to be in a situation where you have opportunity and you have to try to limit your responsibility a little bit. I was responsible for myself.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA To a certain extent, my family in some ways. But I remember when I was splitting time between business school and the company, the hardest two years of my life, still to this day, as hard as this pandemic was, not harder than the two years I spent as a full-time business school student and a full-time CEO. Because I was in Boston and I was in New York, literally commuting about eight to 10 hours every single week. In New York City, I lived in a crawl space above my office where I got concussed twice, because if I got up too quickly, I'd hit the concrete over my head.

LUVVIE Ooh.

JESSICA The wildest shit. I remember studying for exams, driving to go and raise my first seed round, in traffic, wildest, wildest.

LUVVIE Wow.

JESSICA And I had no concept of how self-care would play a role in my ability to lead. And so I just let my whole body and life go.

LUVVIE And what years was that? 2013?

JESSICA Yeah. How do you... I got in fall of 2012, that's when I started. So it was like 2013, 2014.

LUVVIE That's... I can't even imagine.

JESSICA It was crazy. It was insane. I was young.

LUVVIE What did you walk away with besides the degree during that time?

JESSICA Oh, I remember thinking that I could do anything because I remember that it was so hard. It took up so much time that after that, no matter how busy I was, I would never be that busy. I would wake up each morning and I would make Runa tea and I'd put red bull zero in the tea. And I'd go to class... And I remember one time I yelled at a professor because I was just... I think she called me Jennifer instead of Jessica. And I was like, "It's Jessica." I was just like damn. I had to go later to her and be like, "I would like to apologize for scaring you."

LUVVIE Because you wasn't in the Harvard, girly and shit.

JESSICA Ooh. I was like, "Oh. Yeah, that was a mistake." Yeah, I knew I could never let myself go entirely like that. And there would still be things I'd have to figure out in terms of self care, just in the way life goes. But the biggest, biggest thing I took away from that was, ain't nothing ever going to be as hard. When you push yourself and you know what you can do. And truly, like I said, I can't think of any time that was harder. That took more of me, that took more energy, where I

felt more lost, I had no one to talk to, no advisor, no one to say, "Here's how you balance it. Here's how you think about this or that." Nothing like that.

LUVVIE You were on your own trail, for real.

JESSICA Yeah. It was. You also realize just how different you are too, from some people in business school. People had ways of how they thought about things that were so different for me. I remember just being in business school being like, "I didn't get that from the case. I thought this, or I thought that." And so even I know in business, I'm not your standard American psycho business person. That's not me. I use business, not as like an ends, but as a tool to achieve self-actualization, have an impact. I treat God as my biggest investor. I would sit there and be like, "Yo, I don't know why God gave me so much. But I feel like if these quarterly reports are up to par, he's not going to take away." So I'm like, what's the ROI that you are giving God on the gifts he gave you, because he might be like, "Well, I want to divest." So that's how I...

So I went through the whole thing where I was like, "I don't know about all this. I get it, I guess." But only within reason of the fact that God is my actual investor. And what I'm not trying to do is have a board meeting one day and be like, "What about that evil shit you did here and here and here? How are you going to account for that?" So that's always been the way I have thought about my business and what I do and just what gets me up in the morning. There has to be a balance of... Listen, make money, do well, drive things forward. But that devoid of just who you are as a person, can you look yourself in the mirror? Are you creating a better world for people? Are you making sure that more people on this planet feel good about the lives that they've lived when they die?

LUVVIE Yes.

JESSICA If all of that stuff, isn't part of it, it just doesn't really get me.

LUVVIE The thing is, to your point about God, your career and the space that you're taking up is anointed. There's nothing about it that does not feel anointed. You are running a global power company as a Black woman. Who's not even 35 yet. And commanding respect. You are doing this world changing work. And I'm always in awe because there isn't another Jessica Matthews. Even if you were to look for another Jessica Matthew, she doesn't exist. Even if you were to look. And the fact that your name is next to Elon Musk in terms of the work that you're doing for power, amazing. So let's talk now about what you were getting to earlier, in terms of when you realize the real problem beyond the soccer ball, the real problem that you were trying to solve, what was that problem?

JESSICA Yo, so this is wild. I would love to say that it happened super clean. First I thought it was this, and then I realized, but it's never... Anything that's really hard and where they're kind of hiding the ball because the people who are in this industry, I think that they know that if they were very articulate and clear about their problem, they would be in trouble. And so they don't always want to say it out loud. And it was a digging process. So what was great about the socket is that it put me in the room and I was like, "I don't even know if I want to be in this room, but I got in the room." Once you're in there, you're like, "Well, let me see if I could like [inaudible

00:43:42] this off. Let me make it comfortable, let me see what's going on." And so for me, I think it was a process of three realizations over the course of a decade.

First I thought, "Yo." I knew that this was an infrastructural problem. Ain't no soccer ball going to solve the world's energy problems. But I thought that one of the biggest issues was inspiration of some of my own cousins who are chemical, electrical, industrial engineers being like, "There's nothing we can do." And I was like, "There needs to be a way for you to realize that there is something you can do." So I create a soccer ball to inspire. And generally started doing energy-generating, play [crosstalk 00:44:27]

LUVVIE Explain what the soccer ball did exactly.

JESSICA Basically there was a dynamo mechanism inside of the ball. I'm trying to think about a simple way to explain it.

LUVVIE So basically... You know what, let me do it in non-scientist terms for y'all.

JESSICA Okay.

LUVVIE So Jessica invented a soccer ball, that as people are playing with the ball, it's harnessing energy.

JESSICA Mm-hmm (affirmative).

LUVVIE That ball, because it's already harnessed energy can then go to help you charge your phone. So she invented all the things-

JESSICA Jump rope that could do it too.

LUVVIE Jump rope. I have the jump rope.

JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE My jump rope is right here. You have the jump rope. You have the stroller, as you're roller pushing the stroller it harness' the energy, you can plug your phone into the stroller. So that is the very basic 101 version of what Jess invented. All right. Continue.

JESSICA Yes. So I started first and I was like, "Let's create things that generate energy from normal life." But it started with play. Because I was like, if you are playing and doing something fun and then getting the power that you need, psychologically that opens a door from a tangible accessible world, into what's being perceived as a scary inaccessible world that is energy. So the idea was to create these play products as a door for people to walk through so that we can have more people thinking about what the future of energy should look like.

LUVVIE Yes.

JESSICA I ended up walking through that door too and being like, "Oh shit, okay. What's popping." So then, we're pushing, we're pushing and I'm like, "This is cool, but I don't really see us solving the

problem. I'm still sitting in the dark half the time when I'm in Nigeria. So we're not there yet. And we can't just all be playing with soccer balls." So then I was like, "Alright, bet. Maybe we need to create a model because it's not just about energy generation. There's also about how energy gets where it's going and how you store it." So we start to build our IP and just a different way of thinking about all three of those things. And that's when we started working with the good babies of the world for the strollers, different companies, Intel saying, "Here's how you should think about your embedded energy strategy." But mostly on the consumer side still.

It was around 2016. And we were getting ready to really push on that. And they're like, "Oh, it's going to be like two, three years of testing and certification before you can put a product out." And that was like, "Two or three years?" And I was like, "When are you going to pay me, in two or three years?" I was like, "All right. I don't know." This is deadass what happened. I was like, "I don't really know how I'm going to survive two to three years." And then I was like... Also, it was going to take two to three years for a stroller then why am I so afraid of infrastructure? Because that's how long it's going to take for me to put out an infrastructure product. And that's the actual solution.

And I started to see the writing on the wall with some of the consumer products, like Fitbit jaw, like whatever. I was like, "I feel like infrastructure is where... I feel like all of these things are going to lose investment. I feel like infrastructure is where people are going to start investing. That's where the actual solution is. I've always known that's the problem." And then basically 2016, the election happened. And you know, people always talk about Obama being this incredibly inspiring guy. And Obama is a genius. He did not inspire me to do shit. I saw him and I was like, "He's a smart ass man. Constitutional scholar. Yes, he should be president." Then Trump got elected. And I was like, "So you mean to tell me this barely literate, fool-

LUVVIE Barely literate.

JESSICA Not only did he run for president and become president, that he used to do infrastructure. At that moment, I was like, "I've been tripping. While I'm over here and putting myself in this lane, people who can barely read are running for president and building infrastructure." And I was like, "No, nigga." Called up the team. I was like, "We going to start building infrastructure. I've been fucking around. Clearly. You ain't got to be that smart to do this shit. Also I might run for president. Mark it." Because clearly... I think I could do better. If it's about who can do better, I could do better than him. I could definitely, I am 150% smarter than this fool. So anyhow... Thank you Donald Trump. Because if it was not for you, I would not be where I am right now. Just like Obama made you run for president, you made me want to take over the world. So look at that.

LUVVIE Amen.

JESSICA Because I was like, "Oh, okay. No worries." So that's when we started working on infrastructure and that's when we started looking at the ground and what you can build. And we started doing some stuff at energy generating ground, which is cool. But that's when we really realized we dug in, built a lot of IP and realized that, this is going to sound crazy, that the thing that was needed was not just about power, infrastructure is integrated. We use everything together. We use power, we use broadband, everything's together and it's all about sustainable infrastructure.

And so when we started to really dig and look at everything, we were like, "All these new technologies already exist as I was saying earlier. So why don't all these communities have them?" It's almost like you go to a food buffet, a good one, the ones with the prime rib and the lobster, the good shit. And you're like, "Ooh, I'm about to eat this shit up." And then you're like, "All right, bet. Where's the tray?" And they're like, "What tray?", "All right, where's my plate." "What plate?" "Where's my spoon?" And so you're like, "So how do you expect me to take this food and eat it at my table?" And they look at you and laugh. That's the problem. The problem we have right now is that we have all of these technologies that exist, but there is no streamlined way to actually integrate them, deploy them and manage them in communities.

And so the result is piecemeal expensive solutions that cannot scale. And that's why we don't have renewable power everywhere. That's why we have power cables that a little bit of wind causes a fire in California for months, instead of those power cables being in the ground. That's why some kids still don't have internet. That's why Flint may not even have clean water. All of this shit is like siloed, archaic shit that people don't really know how to pull together-

LUVVIE [inaudible 00:50:43] talking to each other. So it's all just existing in different planes.

JESSICA You try to go to a city and say, "Who manages this, this and this?" It should be one group. It's not. People don't know what the hell is going on. And it's all happening and while shit's popping off. And so I was like, "Wow, okay. So that means we need to create the tray, the plate and the cup. That's what we need to create." And so what we built, we took all of our learnings from how to put things in the ground, took out though that energy generation stuff, it doesn't need to be energy. All we needed was a streamlined platform that would allow you to build infrastructure in an integrated manner. So from laying power cables, to broadband, to sustainable durable sidewalks and roads, to managing water pipes, that's what we built. When you lay our stuff in the ground, you have a platform to easily integrate all these things in the ground, easily, upgrade it and make it serviceable. It's like handing a city, an iPhone that is their infrastructure. And saying, "Here are all the apps that you can upgrade whenever you need to."

LUVVIE Wow.

JESSICA I won't go into the technical ways of how we can, how it's subsidizable, but what's kind of dope is when you then put these papers in the ground...

LUVVIE I just got to say, Black women will save the world.

JESSICA Amen.

LUVVIE Black women will save the world. Because my guy... Again, the world needs us. We just out here like figured it out-

JESSICA Got it.

LUVVIE [inaudible 00:52:21] A really rich woman. And when you become president, can I be in the cabinet?



JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE Just create a secretary of [crosstalk 00:52:28] me, you know what I mean? Just create a cabinet position for me called secretary of side-eye-

JESSICA And truth. Oh.

LUVVIE And my job is to be your anger translator. So whenever you want to cut somebody out, you as a president can't cuss them out. Just be like, "Call my secretary of-

JESSICA You would be so good at that. Kamala used to call you because deadass having been in like some private groups with you. I still remember. Remember when, I will not say this individual's name, made our sweatshirts for our group. And you were like, "I'm sorry, but this isn't good enough." I was like, "Oh, shit. Feedback." You'd be like, "You can't go to a presidents and prime minister, listen, we appreciate your efforts, but this is not going to work so..."

LUVVIE And they'll call you, and you give them the, "All right. Let me give you the diplomatic." Even though let's also be clear, Jess is also the anger translator. So I don't know if the cabinet needs me because Jess can handle all of that with all the smoke. Jess can give all the smoke. So you know what... Again-

JESSICA It would just be a disaster. That's what I'm saying. Can we just talk about God willing when this comes out, Lord Jesus, please. Let this be about... God help me. Jesus. Jesus, please let it be Biden and Kamala. Because honestly, I can't even... If it's not that we can talk about that. But what I love about Biden and Kamala's race right now is, Biden has surrounded himself with Black women. Not just any Black women, Black women who have decided to shave their head. And that way they can only focus on their lashes and their fucking earrings.

LUVVIE Amen Symone Sanders, giving looks.

JESSICA Giving it. Just like, "I'm going to..." And if you put enough of us in a space, the way we cut through bullshit. You can come and say all this noise. It we'll be like, "Right." And you can't... How you going to rattle someone who was built on shaky ground?

LUVVIE Come on.

JESSICA So yeah, do I feel like Black women are particularly suited to solve the world's problems? Yes. Yes, I do.

LUVVIE Because we're constantly solving problems. In our lives, at our jobs. We are constantly making ways out of no ways. We'll see a cave and we'll see a wall and say, "You know what? All right, so how are we going to break up the wall? Well, all I got is my earrings. Bet. All right. Can we make a knife out of the earrings? Yes we can." Next thing you know, We on the other side of the wall.

JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE Black women, we are very much poised and created to solve problems. And if people just listen to us more often, the world will be so much of a better place.

JESSICA So much better. We always organized... I still go back to this last election. I'm like Black women, we don't love all the options. I keep hearing from people just like, "Ugh, it's just so horrible that we're being forced into these options." I'm like, "Don't you live in a wonderful world where you can always get what you want. So when things are uncomfortable, you just don't even want to engage." Do you know that I might as well just kill myself? If that's [inaudible 00:55:39] If my life was always about finding the thing that felt a 100% right, that I would be doing nothing? Do you not understand the luxury and the privilege you have to sit here and complain that you have two uncomfortable options.

JESSICA Whereas the rest of us, we all just did what we had to do. Like I said, I really, really wish... I just want everybody who votes for whoever when it comes time for this to pop off. Just be honest, be honest about who you voted for. Tell me what's up. Tell me why. Tell me what's going on. Because people never want to be honest to Black women because you know who we, we always vote for whoever makes the most sense. So people never want to come... People are afraid of getting this heat. And your book, when's your book coming up?

LUVVIE Yo, my book comes out... [Professional Troublemaker](#) comes out on March 2nd.

JESSICA March 2nd.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA Hopefully by that time, we are focused on how to push Biden and Kamala towards where God wants him to be for all of us and how to fight the violent nonsense of people who are going to think that Trump got robbed.

LUVVIE Yes.

JESSICA And that this book will be a handbook in doing that.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA Like I said, alternatively, it will be a shield for the fire and brimstone.

LUVVIE Okay. Listen. To your point, half of the battle of the world is getting people to believe in the right thing.

JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE And to believe in their power and to believe that things are not necessarily happening at them.

JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE It's not just being thrown at you, that you can actually duck some of it or maybe even throw some of it back. And I feel like that is what I'm trying to make this book do. Is be like, "Yo, if more of us believe this power that we have, even when people are trying to convince us we ain't got it. Yeah. We can move mountains." Imagine if somebody told you and I'm sure you have, because you are a Black woman, not just in regular tech. Because there's "tech" and then there's tech.

JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE Energy and power is tech.

JESSICA Is tech. I agree.

LUVVIE So you're a Black woman, so I know you've heard all the nos, you've heard all the motherfuckers, who've tried to laugh you out the room. And if you let them convince you that you didn't belong there, you wouldn't be where you are today.

JESSICA Oh yeah. And I think the biggest issue we have is this split reality of being aware and paranoid. So aware of the people not believing, aware of the people who are second guessing, aware of the people who don't understand why you're even here talking to them, people who are too busy trying to understand how you got here to even listen to what you're saying. But then the other side of it is you thinking about that when that's not actually what's happening. And so you're blocking yourself. And every single time that we kind of slowed down or slightly diverted off of what our true North is, was because I second guess myself. Or I just didn't believe that I should be the one at the helm of something huge. And I thought there was someone who I could bring in that was smarter or better, or that this part of the work should be left for someone who's smarter or better. That's the theme. I'm going to be honest, that's been my theme.

JESSICA Now each time though, when I would do that, I would literally learn. I'd be like, "You ain't that smart." Each and every time I'd be like, "Hmm, I guess you good at this, but I still got to do it this way." And now I have a decade of experience to be like... It's not even about thinking that you can do everything. It's about realizing that while you are trying to determine if you can or cannot do it, there are people who have no business doing it and taking your shit. It's understanding that this should no longer be a question of, "Am I the best person to do something?" It should be a question of, "Am I the worst?" Everything should be the worst. And yes, we're sitting here and we're like, "Oh, but if I mess up, what if?" Fuck that, let it happen.

JESSICA Enough Black women need to fall. We need to start taking shots that we might miss. We need to start doing things that could not work out. Maybe it's actually good for the world to see that ee're not just magical. We're actually just incredibly pragmatic, hardworking people. I want us to stop being so pragmatic. I want us to stop being so safe. Let us look not so magical. Let us look fucking crazy a little bit because we need...we're not going to see who can actually make the leap for us to really move us forward exponentially in an accelerated way, until we start taking some serious risks. And that's-

LUVVIE That is it girl. Listen. That is the realm that I am in right now. That is why I wrote this book because I need us to actually start doing the thing that we feel unqualified for, that we feel is bigger than us. That we feel like, "Oh, I got some nerve." Yes. Because until we do that, we're going to stay on the ground. And while we talk about magic, magic is in the air. What puts us in the air if we're constantly doing the thing that is touchable? Like I need you to think, "Yes, I can absolutely build the infrastructure of a whole country," so we can stop trying to build the infrastructure of a soccer ball.

JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE How do you get to the country if you're still in soccer ball thinking?

JESSICA Thank you. [inaudible 01:01:07] don't want to keep you in soccer ball thinking because that's where they understand. But you know what? Just think about it this way. If us just doing our basic ass shit looks like magic to everybody else, imagine if we actually start some motherfucking sorcery. Right now, our basic ass shit, that's just magic. Black girl magic is like, "Bitch, I just tied my shoes. Who the hell are you" First of all, what are you doing over there? Because as you said, we are on the ground, just reaching. And people are like, "Oh my God, it's magic." Bitch jump. Leap. Because if they think this is magic, hell yes, if we actually start to leap, there will be no problems on this planet. We are so good at the basics that they already consider it to be magic as you said, but magic does not live on the ground. Magic is in the air.

LUVVIE Magic is in the air and we got to get in the air and we also have to not be afraid of falling because here's the thing about falling. We have enough soft spaces to land. Black women are each other's soft spaces to land. You just decide to do a project and was like, "It didn't go well." We got you still.

JESSICA We are just like, "Hey"-

LUVVIE We'd be like, "Well, you know what, babe, what's the next one?"

JESSICA Onto the next one.

LUVVIE What's the next one we are going to launch. Right? So we actually understand that for me, knowing that Black women are my safe space and my soft place to land makes me want to leap higher. You may realize that even if I fall, they're not going to let me hit the ground all the way. Because at the bottom of it, at the core of it, I have Black women holding me up. It's why when I started my company, I was like, "You know what? I don't know what this rider thing look like. If it don't work out, I can still go sit on my mom's couch. I'd be all right. I wouldn't be homeless. I'd be cool." A lot of people who are afraid to fail, your failure does not really look like failure because if your company fails, you're not going to be homeless. You got home girls who are going to be like, "Anytime you need, come to my house."

JESSICA And you have a foundation, it's not like we out here jumping at the age of five. Most of us still have... You're never going to have a Black girl just out not having a little bit of something. But have you seen a Lovecraft country?

LUVVIE Lovecraft country is a revolution, okay?

JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE Hippolyta.

JESSICA Hippolyta.

LUVVIE The fact that there was basically a parallel narrative of that whole thing, which was Black women, especially Black mothers are time-traveling superheroes. Separate conversation, separate thing.

JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE Everything else happening, but also, "Hi, I'm a time-traveling superhero who can bring my daughter to the future to get a new arm, to then bring her back because I be solving shit."

JESSICA That Hippolyta episode is in itself a poem.

LUVVIE Yes.

JESSICA I was just like, "I have to watch it again because there's so much to grab from it." She said, "Name yourself, name yourself." People are afraid to name themselves basic titles like writer, like inventor-

LUVVIE Yes, a visionary-

JESSICA Visionary, poet.

LUVVIE You are free to say it.

JESSICA Name yourself and you name... Oh my God, that episode, I'm so glad you brought it up. That episode actually captures exactly what we're saying.

LUVVIE Exactly.

JESSICA You don't belong on the ground, Black woman.

LUVVIE Yeah.

JESSICA She had to be pulled. She was like, "You're not in prison, but you want to be." Or "You're not in prison, but you think you are." It was something like that.

LUVVIE This is not prison, you're free to go.

JESSICA You're free to go... because it's the exact same thing. We stay on the ground, we handle all this stuff, we're mad at everybody for keeping us in the ground. Bitch, no one told you you can't

leap. It's true. When you did leap, your daughter then got attacked by some crazy man and locked, sorry, spoiler alert. But there are going to be consequences to us being a little bit selfish and us leaping because yeah, I'm not going to be able to have this money for you to get braces. I tried my idea. Just eat some carrots, brush your teeth and chill, Bobby. I'm trying something out. Alright. Because guess what? Your dad doesn't give a shit about your braces. Your dad tried his idea. Why is it that I have to pay for your braces instead of launching my business idea? So guess what? You're going to floss. And we are going to chill.

LUVVIE We think our jobs on this earth as Black women is to self-sacrifice for the greater good.

JESSICA Constantly.

LUVVIE You don't have to sacrifice your dreams. You ain't got to sacrifice who you are. Hippolyta got mad because she said, "You let me shrink, in fact, you encourage me to shrink." And what happens when we actually commit to not shrinking in this world no more and being like, "I will go explore the Cosmos, I'll be back."

JESSICA I'll be back.

LUVVIE I'll be back. When I'm back, whatever ends up being messed up-

JESSICA I'll fix it.

LUVVIE I'll fix it. It's cool.

JESSICA But I need to take this time. And here's the thing... And George, he was a good dude. Her husband was a good man. People assume that it's the messed up, eye turner dude who's doing it. No, it's a nice, good man that of course you love that still... I don't know... It's not his job to think about this for you. You have to decide what you demand and you have to be able to say, "Listen, I'm going to have to be just a little bit selfish right now." But guess what, it is for the greater good. Because when you let us out... She came back with so much blue hair, she came back with solutions and just magic and just a calm... And she was effective and helpful in different ways.

JESSICA And yet to me, that episode is exactly what we're talking about right now, is exactly what you're talking about in your book. Name ourselves. Why is it that I had to practice when I was raising my round, my first round, I had to practice saying I'm going to build the first billion dollar tech company in Harlem. I had to practice. And even still right now I have to practice it because investors are listening to hear the confidence in your voice. And it is delusional confidence that they're looking for because how else can you say something that isn't true today like it is true today. But everyone else that they're giving money to, that's how they're speaking. Name yourself, name the situation.

LUVVIE That's why I've been calling my book. I've been like, "This book is the number one New York Times best seller."

JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE I'm naming it, claiming it, saying it. Done.

JESSICA Done.

LUVVIE The nerve, the audacity. We need the audacity and people are constantly telling Black women that we are too audacious. No. You're telling us we're too audacious for thinking we should exist. Wait till you actually see us and hear us claim our dreams and name ourselves in all of our bigness. Oh listen. We're about to-

JESSICA Well, to me, that's intimidation too, because again, they see it. You've changed me to the ground and look what I can do. I gave an interview last week and I was like, "Listen, 2020 has been a crazy year. But my company, we've had a Vanguard year. We've had probably the best year." And people were like, "Well, how?" And I was like, "Listen, this year has been hard, but my life has always been hard." And the reality situation is if you're in the gym training with 30 pound weights. If someone hands you then a 45 pound weight, it's heavier. But it's not like I don't know how to lift weights. If you just out running free, you never been handed a weight in your life and someone hands you a 10 pound weight, Oh, you're going to fall. You're going to be like, "The hell is this?" You're not going to know how to... Your grip is going to be wrong. You aren't going to know what you are doing. You might hurt yourself.

JESSICA So yeah, I was like... What they hate, what they see is that when we do see ourselves, we do acknowledge the fact that, listen, "You had me over here training in this Olympic pool, I see that I can swim. You are mad because I'm like if we go into these open waters, I'm going to fuck you up." You saying I'm too braggart. No, I know who I am. And yes, you should be afraid. And yes, you should feel intimidated. And yes, this is me saying you created a monster. You created this monster.

JESSICA I find that even Black men, the Black men that do the best of Black women are the ones who are just like, "She's a queen." The Black men who do the best are the ones who are like, "My job is to protect this visionary. Me and my fiancé, we have an amazing CEO, COO situation." He can do a task, like anything else, Great. He's just a task oriented man and he was like, "Honey, you are the visionary. And I can handle a task list." I'm like, "Yes, you can, baby. Thank you." I am the visionary of this situation and he can handle a task list and he protects me and I create the world that he's protecting. Physically and spiritually and he's there and that's our balance and he understands. We have this mutual respect, I truly, truly believe. Even when you go back to that show Lovecraft country, you noticed how none of the ancestors who came back were men? You noticed how it was just a series of Black women trying to help Tic through whatever the hell he was going through.

LUVVIE Yeah. That's because, I'm telling you Black women are the spiritual grounding of the world, we're the conscience of the world. And when we realize our full power, our full power and purpose for being here, when we realize that we cannot and should not apologize for whoever we are, how we take up space, man, listen, like how the Black ancestors came back, the Black women was like, "I figured it out. Here's my power." I'm excited for us. And honestly, that's why I love how we show up and how our friends show up in this world as these Black women who were like, "Listen, we've learned, we are trying to understand our power-

JESSICA The educated group in the United States most...

LUVVIE We started businesses, we're over here running stuff. And yeah, I think-

JESSICA We get old white men elected. We're just out here.

LUVVIE We are out here just doing everything and being everything and being bomb while doing it.

JESSICA I think Zora Neale, Hurston, I think I actually said this quote back when we first met in 2016, I was like, "As hard as it is to be a Black woman, I would not trade it for the world." I don't want to be a Black man. I don't want to be a white woman. I for damn sure don't want to be a white man. Because when we win against all odds, now that's a story. When I raised my series A at the time, it was the largest series A that a Black woman got raised in history. It was only \$7 million though, largest for a Black woman, average that year. So on one hand, it's like, "Damn, I had to go to Harvard twice and be in the cover of Forbes and do all this shit to do the average that a white guy did." I had to do so much more for something like that was nothing.

JESSICA However, no one was talking about the average white guy and what he did. So on the flip side though, while I had to do so much more by getting up there and not only did I happen to be proud of. Did I have something to say, but I also then had to show that because I've done more, I'm actually better suited. I'm more likely to do well as we keep going, because I had to work a little harder. I had to fight for it. And so I love the pressure. I think it was Jamie Lee King that said, pressure's a privilege. I love the pressure that creates the diamond that is a Black woman. I love what it has turned me into.

JESSICA And without all those different pressure points, I wouldn't be who I am. I wouldn't have accomplished what I've accomplished. And it's a beautiful thing. I feel like a superhero. I feel like Hippolyta. Most Black women, if we really sit with it, we feel like superheroes. That's what it is. We know we do. We know it. And that's even the Black women who don't speak in their minds. You know you feel... That's one thing... come on, we definitely feel like superheroes. Even if we don't have the blue hair or this or that-

LUVVIE Some of us do have the blue hair.

JESSICA Some of us do?

LUVVIE Why not?

JESSICA We feel like superheroes and that's a special feeling. I'm grateful for that feeling. And I love our Black men who see that the power of their Black women and take care of us and protect us as the biggest asset of our community. Black men who are like, "The biggest asset, the thing that continues life is a woman. And so we're going to protect. Our job as Black men is to protect what continues our life." And their power and their strength in protecting us I love, and I honor, and I respect.

LUVVIE Yes. There is something amazing about being supported by Black men who sees you.



JESSICA Yeah.

LUVVIE So I definitely feel an honor that, and I think combined, a Black man who sees the power in Black women and a Black woman who sees her full power together, our world changing generation of curse breaking, we'll have to find each other. We have to start finding more of each other in that way and affirming each other. So listen, there should be one, we are ready. Just let me know the hashtag because listen, one year into marriage, I'm like, "Bro, there's something that is heart fulfilling that lets you know that you were supposed to find this person who's supposed to be your co-pilot."

JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE You need a co-pilot because listen, the Black woman, after a while we just got to go lay our burdens down on and have somebody be like, "I got you."

JESSICA For real.

LUVVIE That's amazing.

JESSICA I call my bonnet my thinking cap now, because I saw this meme, I saw this chick said, "Hold on, let me put my thinking cap on." And she put a bonnet on and I was like, "Yes." Since him as my baby, Chris will be like, "Baby, maybe you just need to put your thinking cap on and you feel better," and I was like, "You right baby. You right."

LUVVIE Yoo. That's hilarious. Not the thinking cap.

JESSICA I'd be like, "Let me put my..." I be thinking some good shit with this thing on.

LUVVIE See, bonnets are magical. So you put that on you like, "Ooh, yes."

JESSICA You feel free. I don't got to be worried about shit, let me just solve world hunger real quick.

LUVVIE This is amazing because, and I think this conversation is exactly why I decided to rename this podcast Professional Troublemaker because there are some people in this world who are making some good trouble. So what is your definition of a professional troublemaker?

JESSICA I do consider myself a professional troublemaker. I have never, ever accepted the status quo as my default. There were so many different things that people said, "Well, this is how they should be done. Well, you should consult for two years before you go to business school, you should do this. You should do that." No. I see the world, not as it is, but as it should be. In both the macro and micro moments, create my space, create the world. And so a professional troublemaker is someone who's not even just willing, obsessed with the idea of molding their world period, that's it.

JESSICA The world is not a fixed porcelain structure. It is clay. And that's it. There's always a way to create something that works for you and what is trouble if it's not when you look at the shaking ocean of waves, it's disruption. Yes an instability, but that instability comes because there's

something that's transforming, there's something that's changing. And so that is a professional trouble maker, 150%.

LUVVIE You are absolutely one of my favorite professional troublemakers. It's dope to exist in a world where you know there are others like you, who you like, you know what? I might be destructing some stuff, but she over there doing it too, so hey girl.

JESSICA Let's do it.

LUVVIE And it goes like, "Got some tips?" When it gets hard, when we have each other to battle through some things out of, we have each other to support and be like, "You got this, I know it's tough. Keep going."

JESSICA Yes.

LUVVIE And that's really affirming. I love it. I'm so excited that I meet other professional troublemakers and end up becoming like sisters with them. So then as you're doing all of this trouble-making, what are you doing to take care of yourself?

JESSICA Oh Lord. Well, a big thing was definitely getting a routine on self-care. And so it hasn't been perfect during the pandemic, but there are a couple of things that I still just hold true. So one is water, it might sound ridiculous but literally on my zooms now I introduce myself and I introduce my gallon of water. And I try to drink a gallon of water every single day. I know it sounds ridiculous, but that's a thing. Drink a gallon of water. Meditate. Sometimes I don't do it for a couple of weeks, but I try to meditate for 15 to 20 minutes every single day, at least five days a week. Work out, sweat in some way, even if I have to have a mask on, I'm boxing three days a week, that helps me.

JESSICA Then you obviously try to be intentional with what you're eating. As I had mentioned earlier though, pandemic ikebe came through and you know what? I like it. I like it. Because there's a lot, it's just about to pop off. I need to know that I got some... If I fall, I'm going to bounce back up because my ass is [inaudible 01:19:56]. So I'm cool with pandemic ikebe at this moment. But I will pull it back together for the wedding photos [crosstalk 01:20:07]. And sleep. I don't sleep nearly as much as I need to, but I for damn sure I'm not doing this all night or bullshit.

LUVVIE Who got time for that? I can't even... No.

JESSICA When I stay awake for some time I'm like, "I'm going to sleep." Maybe once every four months I might have to work late, late and it's more because some shit just popped off and it's like, "All right, fine. I'm going to get this done." Otherwise it's like, "I'm tired. I'm going to sleep. This is going to get done tomorrow. I don't want to be killing myself." So even if it's just trying to get six hours of sleep at night or something, it's like, "I can't be out here only getting two hours of sleep acting like that's something to brag about." That don't make no sense.

LUVVIE No.

JESSICA Yeah and to need to spend time with my partner and making sure we do our little date nights and Halloween right now, we're like, "Oh, we can't really..." We're still going to dress up. We're going to have some cute little outfits or Friday night, I'm going to be sister night, which Regina King, she killed it in the Watchman and he's going to be Dr. Manhattan, he's ghosty, he's going to wear blue and we're going to do that cute thing. And then the next night I'm going to be Beyoncé from Mood 4 Eva. And he's going to be Jay Z. I got myself a long blonde braid wig. And I'm making my little leopard print stuff that she had people working on for a thousand hours and I'm over here and just trying to make our little things, we made our little house like a little haunted mansion. And what's crazy is we don't have people coming over. So basically we are just consistently scaring this week our trainer, my makeup artist and my hairstylist, it's full on scaring.

LUVVIE You all are nuts.

JESSICA That's it. Those are the things you got to make time to laugh.

LUVVIE No, that's actually like good self-care. You're drinking water, getting good sleep, exercising. Ma'am you've actually checked off all the boxes. You've checked off all the boxes. Eating okay... You're winning at self-care. You are winning at self-care right now. The water thing I got to get better at. I bought myself a gallon bottle, but it was harder for me, but it doesn't have the straw. So now I got to get a new one because without the straw, I got to pour it into.

JESSICA I just have straws. I try to get ones I can reuse and stuff because this is too heavy otherwise. So sometimes you need to have this little straw here.

LUVVIE And I need to get better on my water intake. I do. I actually do. You might've inspired me to make sure I'm getting back on that.

JESSICA Critical stuff.

LUVVIE Jess, this conversation was energizing to my whole spirit.

JESSICA This is mad fun.

LUVVIE The gems that you have dropped. Listen. So how can people support... you have a lot of work that's going on behind the scenes.

JESSICA Yeah. What's going on? Okay. So when this comes out, it's going to be popping off. That's going to be popping off. If you're not already, you got to follow the company, follow me on our social media. So I'm [jessomatt, J-E-S-S-O-M-A-T-T on Instagram](#), on [Twitter](#). I don't really use anything else. I barely use Twitter, mostly IG, but it's all there. Company, [Uncharted Power](#), check out what's popping off. We are building a first of its kind sustainable smart community in Poughkeepsie, New York, actually where I was born. About 90 minutes out of the city. And what we're doing is literally using our technology to address how infrastructure is built in this community so that the citizens themselves can get access to resilient power infrastructure, to better sidewalks, better roads, broadband, all the things that they want. We're building that. We're actually going to be breaking ground.

So you could go and check that out in Poughkeepsie if you want. When this comes out, you could just drive up there, like what's popping, and watch this space because once we've shown the world how this works, we're going to be signing up cities. We're signing up cities domestically. We're signing up cities internationally. And we're just going to start scaling. That's it. Because as far as I'm concerned, no matter who wins this election, this shit's not going to work no more. It isn't going to be like this. We cannot continue to move forward like this. I believe in equity. I believe that the future is bright. And so the biggest way to support is, if you want your city to be next, go to our website, [u-pwr.co](http://u-pwr.co), sign up to learn more, find out what's going on and we will have information so that you can go and start to talk to your local mayor and be like, "What's popping. What's going on? How do we make sure that our city gets this and X." And then we'll do our best to get to you.

LUVVIE           Epic. Jess, thank you for joining me.

JESSICA          Thank you for having me girl. Stay safe out here.

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Yo. This conversation was so dope. SO DOPE! I loved her talking about using resources – your brain, the money you make – as a tool for good. For me, that's what sets Jessica apart as a professional troublemaker and not just a successful businesswoman. She's not just going after the dollars. She's taking care of business, for real, but she's asking those bigger questions. Are you creating a better world for people? Are you making sure more people on the planet feel good about the lives that they've lived? Are you using the gifts God has given you to make an impact? Big questions to ask yourself as we're sitting here at the beginning of a new year. And honestly, those are questions I always ask.

So, be sure to follow Jessica on social media. She's [@jessomatt](#) on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), and follow her company Uncharted Power at [@unchartedpower](#) on Instagram. And much love to Chicago Recording Company, who I've been partnering with on all things radio voice – including the podcast and my audiobook for Professional Troublemaker.

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@ProfessionalTroublemaker on Instagram or just tag and follow me on social media. I'm @Luvvie everywhere.

Until next time, have the courage to speak your truth and show up as yourself. Create good trouble.