

Buffering the Vampire Slayer
Episode 0.30: A Conversation with
Alba Daza & Mackenzie MacDade

[Buffering theme plays]

Alba: Hello and welcome to a conversation on Buffering the Vampire Slayer with me, Alba.

Mack: And me, Mack.

Alba: Today we're gonna talk about... a lot of different things. But we're gonna focus on how we came to the podcast and our experiences in the podcast so far, and what we hope to accomplish in the podcast, mixed in with a lot of other things.

Mack: I'm sure there's gonna be some Buffy tangents as well, because hi there, it's why we got our jobs in partiality.

Alba: Maybe in—mostly is why we got this job, is because [both laugh] we were both obsessed with Buffy. [laughs] I think it would be really fun if we talked about how we both came to the show. Like, how we discovered the show and the impact on our lives. I talked a little bit about this on the podcast before, but I discovered Buffy when I was 12. Because my mom had a boyfriend who was a really big Buffy fan, him and his son were both Buffy fans. And we—me and my mom were like, really? Like, Buffy? Like, are you sure? I don't know. 'Cause that's the rep that the show had at—you know, still, some people think it's like, not a good show. But they don't know what they're missing. [both laugh]

And so we started watching it and immediately became obsessed. We used to rent the DVDs from this kind of like progressive video store in our neighborhood. It was basically like my first love, is like, how I explain it to people. Like, Buffy the Vampire Slayer... not like, Buffy herself, but like, the show was my first true obsession and dedication and like, love affair. [both laugh] And because of Buffy, I realized that, you know, screenwriter was a job, because of Jane Espenson and like, Marti Noxon. I was like, wait a second. People like, write for TV? Like, that's a job that people do? [Mack laughs] Like, I wanna do that. So I have been—you know, since, I don't know, thirteen—I've always wanted to be a writer. And I ended up studying film production and you know, that's my jam. I like, write on the side and work in film production and like, pretty much because of Buffy.

Mack: For me, it was a bit similar. So I was a very precocious kid and my favorite movie, the year that Buffy came out, was actually a movie from the previous year, *The Craft*.

Alba: Ooh.

Mack: And I could talk... ad nauseum about that movie. [Alba laughs] But it was like, very formative for my identity, right? And so when Buffy rolled through, it was also like the gap between, I wanna say, the last or second-to-last season of *Xena Warrior Princess*.

Alba: Mmm.

Mack: Which is also something my mom and I watched together. And so my mom and I actually watched I think the first maybe season or two seasons of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, together actually, for the most part. Looking back, that first season was a little rough. [Alba laughs] But I can see why, like, eight-year-old me was like, *really* into it, right? But yeah, I watched it in real time. Every week, there was a monster of the week. You know, we were on edge about graduation. You know, that whole—whole rollercoaster. My age group, millennial-wise, we had a lot of strong, bad-ass female characters.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Weirdly enough, some of them thanks to Joss Whedon, right? And I really enjoyed those characters. You know, I enjoyed *Xena* and *Gabrielle*. I enjoyed *Buffy*, I enjoyed *Faith* when she rolled into town. I mean, even moving into *Angel*, some of the like, not-so-loved female characters that came through even *Angel*, I liked that they were, like, tough and strong. And so that was always, like, my gravitation towards *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for years and years and years. And post that, it was just a wasteland of grossly unempowered female characters. For years and years and years. So I kept revisiting *Buffy*. I was like, yes. [laughs]

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Women can be powerful. Like, even like the, in quotation marks, "least" among them. Like, *Dawn* could handle herself. [laughs]

Alba: She really could!

Mack: Not to spoil anything, but like—

Alba: There's an episode where she, like, kicked somebody and I was like, oh!

Mack: Right?

Alba: Look at you with your bad self! Like. [laughs]

Mack: Well, we just had The Gift, where she's the only person I can think of who forced Glory to face her as Glory. She demanded it, like, she was like, I'm probably gonna die, but you're gonna look me in the eye as you do it. [both laugh] Yeah, and so I wrote about it really intensely in college. Like, *really* intensely in college. If you have seen any of my Buffering stuff, I mention that like, in college, every paper I wrote was about Buffy.

And then I met Jenny and Kristin while we were doing camp, and they did live shows. So I knew they were doing a podcast, but like, I have a long list of podcasts. But they did live shows, live recordings. And so that's the first time I heard about Buffer—or heard Buffering happening. And so like, I popped in and listened, but I actually keep up with the podcast because my kids at work are obsessed with all Jenny's songs from Buffy the Vampire Slayer. [Alba laughs] Like, *obsessed*. It's super cute. So then Kristin's like, hey, so we wanna make all these changes and I've worked with you, doing this, on camp—on a camp scale. So how about a podcast scale that has like, 5,000 listeners? [both laugh]

Alba: I think it's more than that. [laughs]

Mack: Don't tell me that.

Alba: I think it's a lot more than that. [laughs]

Mack: Don't tell me that. [laughs]

Alba: Kristin told me... she told me it was 30,000.

Mack: Oh. Okay. [Alba laughs] That—

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: That explains why my inbox looks the way it does. [both laugh]

Alba: By camp, you mean A-Camp, right?

Mack: Yeah. The website Autostraddle.com runs a camp called A-Camp. And I was actually a camper, turned junior staff member as a lifeguard, turned senior staff member as co-director of the Speakeasy, which was the PSU space. So we A) made sure that the programming itself was inclusive and anti-racist, and then also held closed spaces for all sorts of POC folks. So sometimes it was like, yo, here's our, you know, specifically Asian space, or Pacific Islander meetup, or you know, a black meetup or a—like, we're from—we're black but we're from Britain. Which we had a lot of people, surprisingly.

Alba: Interesting.

Mack: And so we just sort of made sure we had spaces that could—

Alba: And that's kind of like what we're trying to do now.

Mack: Just with 30,000 people. Which I didn't know before, thanks. [both laugh]

Alba: I think, like, really why I wanna do this work and why I have chosen to be part of the podcast is because I felt lonely, sometimes, listening to the podcast. I felt like there were things that were just being brushed over, that there wasn't conversations around the things that represented who I was and my struggle as a POC or other POC people. And it was lonely and it was painful. Like, when Forrest was killed, like, so gruesomely. Like, they turned him into a monster.

Mack: Ugh.

Alba: You know? Like, was that really necessary? And the fact that like—

Mack: [clapping as she speaks] Not at all! [laughs]

Alba: Not at all! Not at all necessary. And the fact that I think most people don't, like, look at that through a critical lens and be like, why do we have to mutilate our POC people?

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: Like, why? Why do we have to mutilate black, indigenous and POC—and more than anything, black people, right? Like, all the time. You know, Kristin and Jenny completely brushed over that. And I remember, I was like, in the bathroom, doing something, getting ready, and like, that's when I listen to the podcast. And I was like, waiting for them to talk about it, you know? Just like, sitting there, waiting for them to talk about it, and they didn't. And that was like, so disappointing for me

in that moment. And so after George Floyd was murdered, for me, I was like—this is a time where I had really been thinking, like, what am I gonna do? Like, what am I gonna do to create any positive impact? Like, how am I gonna use my voice, how am I gonna use my energy? And for me, like, I decided to put that energy into sending an email to Kristin and Jenny about, like, how they could make the podcast more accessible and more inclusive in those conversations, in the tone—in the general tone of the podcast. Because I felt, as a listener, that that was really lacking.

Mack: For me, it was... like, Kristin asked and it was literally, I wanna say, a week and a half, maybe two, after George Floyd's murder. And I mean, LA was shutting down parts of Beverly Hills. Minneapolis was quite literally still on fire. They were toppling statues into the ocean. [laughs]

Alba: Hell yeah, man.

Mack: And so I was sort of—right?

Alba: Hell yeah.

Mack: And so I was sort of looking around, you know, in my house. I work at a church. You know, I live with, you know, my mom, who's elderly. So like, I ain't gonna be out in these streets. So I was like, what—what is a thing that I can do, other than like, run my mouth on the internet. But I do that anyway, right? [Alba laughs] To my, you know, then 500-person audience. You know, I deal in information is what I tell people. Like, I learned to do it during Occupy. So during Occupy Wall Street, I was a sophomore in college. And we learned that you can listen to police scanners online and use social media to tell the crowds where the cops were coming from.

Alba: Mm.

Mack: And like, communicate to bring people, like, recharged batteries for cameras and phones. And so I learned to do that, so like, that's what I was doing during Occupy. That was my skill set. Same thing during Ferguson. I ran information. But with this, I was like, they don't need me. Like, we've come to the point in which they could run their own social media—like, they do not need me. What am I gonna do?

So when Kristin said, hey, [laughs] we want to do this specific anti-racist work that everyone's talking about and all these, you know, big companies are wrestling with and small companies are wrestling with. We wanna do it and we wanna do it

intentionally. And we wanna pay you to do it. I actually had to stop and think and go, like, hold up. If this goes really bad... um... [laughs] you know, in the middle of this—well, that's gonna be really bad, on me. But then like, I really thought about, like, the work that I've done with Kristin and Jenny. And like, we have been in the trenches together and they have always had the best of intentions. They have always been like, uh, oops, we fucked up, we need to fix it. So I chose to do this work because both I needed an outlet or I was gonna lose my mind—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: And because the outlet provided was something A) I am excessively knowledgeable about, and I trust Kristin and Jenny to be operating in the best of faith. Ha-ha, Faith.

Alba: [laughs] It's been encouraging to see two white people that, like, I idolized, for sure, kind of show up and be like, I don't know everything. And I realize that I fucked up and I'm gonna do the best in my capacity, which is limited, of course, and learning still, but to try to do the right thing. And that, for me, has been like, a really good sign of, this is the right place to be putting that energy. 'Cause I think, in so many other spaces, people just—always, again, take for granted the work of, like—the work of people of color as a given or as, like, a "they should." And I think they've done a really good job of like, compensating you and I and making sure that we have a voice and making sure that we have a space. And like, really trusting what we say and not... well, I don't know your experience. But that's my experience, of like, whatever I bring to the table is always received really positively and carefully and responsibly.

Mack: Yeah. Yeah, I've never gotten like a single, like, "well, I don't think that's relevant." It's always like, "okay, so how have we presented this previously? How do we need to look at this?" And I was like, yes. See, just the openness to be like, we need to look at this. Sometimes that's all it needs to be. Like. [laughs]

Alba: Mmhmm. Yeah, right, and I think that's what's so important about, like, doing anti-racist work, for white people, is just to be like, I need to open my eyes to this thing that's gonna be painful and gonna be difficult and probably gonna be attached or look like or come with a lot of shame and embarrassment. And I just need to like, look at it and like, deal with my feelings and do something about it, without panicking.

Mack: Yeah. The sense of panic is—it stops a lot of work from being done. Not necessarily because POC get frustrated with it, but because like, white folks don't—they're not taught how to handle that—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: In the way people of color are taught to do that, as a means of survival.

Alba: Yeah. Yes. Yeah. And the way that, like, people of color are taught to swallow our emotions or like, deal with them or hold them without, you know, responding with them, because we can't. You know? It's not safe to, like, 90% of the time. But you know, white people aren't taught that like, hey, maybe you shouldn't say that because there's gonna be backlash. [laughing] You know?

Mack: Yeah, I mean, okay. Again, as I've been told many times, people don't like me, you know, using Buffy's analogy, but that's how I live my life. I'm sorry. [crosstalk]

Alba: Um, but this is the podcast—this is our literal job. [Mack laughs] So if there's anywhere to do it, please do it here. [laughs]

Mack: Well, okay, so I posit a thing. [clears throat] I'm gonna say this out loud on the podcast for the first time. So I posit that Faith Leane is coded as black, for many reasons. One of which is, her Slayer is murdered. Keep in mind she's 15—

Alba: Her Watcher?

Mack: Her Watcher, yeah. She's called at 15 years old. And she deals and she gets herself *all* the way to Sunnydale. She's a kid from a broken home with no one to go back to, and gets herself to where she's supposed to be safe. [Alba sighs] Buffy, at 15, stomps her feet, throws a fit and says, I quit. Buffy has the privilege—

Alba: Mmm.

Mack: Of having that reaction. In order to stay alive, Faith has never, even before she was called, had the privilege of doing so. And I think that is the difference between the two of them and partially why Faith is coded as black.

Alba: Yeah. That's such a—

Mack: There's my hot take. [laughs]

Alba: That's a really good point. That's just a really, really good point. And it's true, when we look at survival and what people have to do to survive and how that's not typically—like, yeah, we see movies about survival, for sure. But I think privilege is

just a really good point to bring up here, because it's not something that white people usually have to struggle with. And it's not—mm. I guess we do have to see it in media, but it's not the same.

Mack: At all. [laughs]

Alba: [laughs] It's just not the same. And Faith does deal—have to deal with it and she is, like, shunned by everyone. And she's not good enough, according to whoever. And she does constantly do what it takes—like, do what she needs to do to survive, even going to the mayor. You know? Because she wasn't like, fully accepted in the Scooby gang. Like, she never was taken in as like one of their own, welcomed into the crew. So like, she found the comfort and the protection and the—like, he provided for her.

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: Nobody was like, hey, Faith, like, stay in my house or like, here's an extra room. Whatever—

Mack: You literal child. Like. [laughs] I never understood that. I'm like, she's a literal child! Like, what's wrong with you people? [laughs] It's a privilege thing. It's the idea that like—

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Some people aren't given the privilege of not handling the ugly of life and others are.

Alba: Mm, yes. That's it. That's it. When like, the ugly of life is what you're forced to look at and deal with. And when you have the privilege to not look at it, you know? That's something that you—when you don't have to, like, realize how difficult life can be. You know? Or fully understand the scope. It's just like, alright, then maybe you should just, like, take a minute. Reflect. And just also, like, please be quiet. You know?

Mack: [laughs] Yeah.

Alba: You don't need to say anything. Just listen. Make space. It's okay, it's fine, we know you're there.

Mack: Yeah, I think—

Alba: We know you have processes, we know you have feelings. It's not the time.

Mack: I think one of my responses to somebody was, okay, what I need you to do is think about it. Do you have an opinion that's going to contribute to a rich conversation, or do you have an opinion that you wanna post, because clearly? [both laugh] Like. And it sounds—like, some people say it sounds harsh. But then I've had a couple people come back and go, okay, but when I thought about it, that is actually pretty fair. I kind of assumed that because I have an opinion, it needed to be said. It's like, yeah, it doesn't. [Alba laughs] And thank you for recognizing that.

Alba: Okay, so. Let's see. We have another point here, how we have the same goals, approach from different directions. Should we talk about that?

Mack: Yes. Absolutely. So I think our same goal is to build anti-racism into the foundations of Buffy.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: So it's like, you know, when they go back and they retro-fit buildings for earthquakes that have already existed, it's the same concept. Right? We're going back to the bones of what Buffering is and going, hey, here's the way we can make these specific changes that are anti-racist. And now because they're part of the structure, then when you're building out or you're filling the office spaces, et cetera, anti-racism is always there. And so we're doing that by, you know, even just having a hey, you can let us anonymously let us know if something has bothered you or there's something you think you'd wanna change. And the anonymity—which, you know, one of the big things that happens in spaces is people of color speak up and there's huge blow-back for them personally.

Alba: Yes, yeah.

Mack: But that doesn't happen when you have an anonymous way to voice your opinion. So it's things like that. It's also looking at how we're discussing all episodes, but specifically ones that deal in race or don't deal in race but should.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: How some of those intersect with race and gender. I think once we get into Season 7, that's a more common conversation that'll need to happen. Just going, okay. Take this episode. Jenny, Kristin, what are your views? Great. Here's some supplementary [both laugh] things that you might have missed.

Alba: Yeah, and I think—

Mack: So that they can get in the habit of noticing those things too—

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: And also, for the, you know, listenership, going, you love this thing so much and you have such a deep history with it. Here's a new lens with which to view it, which will help you be more connected to other people of color.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: And also as non-black people of color—

Alba: Mmhmm, yeah.

Mack: To see how black folks are viewed. And as black folks, to see how like, non-black people of color view you, view themselves within the show, that sort of thing. So having those big anti-racist conversations and I guess I would say anti-prejudice conversations within the POC community.

Alba: Mmhmm. Yeah, that's a really good way of putting it. And also, I think by doing that work, it's lending a lens to people—or like a window into something that, you know—we were just talking about privilege. And like, the privilege of not *needing* to look at the nitty gritty of something.

Mack: Yes.

Alba: And being like, oh shit, that exists. Like, I should probably look at that. And you know, listening to Buffering, like, I didn't really ever realize how queer Buffy was, growing up. Like, I did not know. And then—

Mack: [quickly] Oh, I did. [both laugh]

Alba: Yeah. I know. [both laugh] I think if you're queer, then you know, but I grew up, like, not super queer, not really—

Mack: Bad Girls! How—

Alba: I know, yeah.

Mack: How did you watch Bad Girls and not pick up on that? [laughs]

Alba: I don't know, man. Like, I was—I was—I don't know! I don't know. [Mack laughs] It just wasn't part of my radar. And then I was like—

Mack: I love it.

Alba: Watching it, I was like—I was like, oh my god, like, yeah. Obviously! [Mack laughs] And like, my mom had noticed it but she just never talked to me about it. Like, I don't know, anyway. But anyway, needless to say that my experience with this podcast also has opened me up to like, realize how queer Buffy is. And how queer, like, everything is. And like, I love it. I feel very immersed into, like—I've just had a new perception in the way I process information is different, content information, the way I relate to my queer friends is different because of this podcast. You know? So I think, if anyone relates to that experience, or having kind of that solidarity in this podcast as a queer person, we're trying to add a layer of race discussions.

Mack: I think taking a show that seems so, so... white, but going, hey, but look at the tropes, if you will—

Alba: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Mack: That were borne of this and look how much of that you see in the varied media that you consume now.

Alba: Exactly, yeah.

Mack: So this is where it started. So you can look at it and go, hey, cool. And then you can take it and apply it to whatever diverse you want to. This is your primer—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Then go take it for a spin in the big world.

Alba: Exactly. And I think that's it. I think, you know, for me growing up, I related so much of Buffy to the real world. That was like, really ingrained in my understanding and my learning about life. And I think it still is, you know, now that I've, like, lived as an adult for awhile. 'Cause I haven't really watched through the entire series since I was maybe in my early 20s. And I'm like, holy shit, this is deep. You know? The way that they're talking about these issues is like—really

resonates with me now, in a way that it didn't when I was younger, 'cause I hadn't had those experiences.

But being able to draw those parallels between the show and life, and being able to see different aspects, is exactly what you said, like, a primer to then understand like, oh, that thing they talked about in Buffy and like, that race thing. Oh, it's happening right here with my friends in this circle. Let me see, like, how I wanna deal with that and what my choices are as a black person, as a non-black POC, as a white person. Like, how am I gonna deal with this issue that has been brought forward to me?

Mack: Yeah, for me, the big lesson that I took away from, even as a kid, was: men will always fear women's power.

Alba: Mm, yeah.

Mack: That—like, and I remember that so clearly.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: There have been moments in my life where I was like, and *this* is how Buffy was treated.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: And *this* is how Willow was treated, like, by her friends when she became too powerful. You know, and [inaudible] like I said, Faith is my girl. Like, even to the end, they were afraid of her. But part of what they also feared was, she was always—she had already stepped in her power, but the time she got to them? She had defined herself.

Alba: Mmhmm. Yeah.

Mack: And so I think for me, that was also a big lesson I learned. Like, when you define yourself, when your power is not bestowed onto you, your power comes from who you are?

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: You're gonna have to forge your own path. And that's something that I learned extremely early—

Alba: Yeah. Yeah.

Mack: From watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

Alba: I think that's such a good point. Because I also think that—I mean, my experience as a woman of color, and I don't wanna speak for both of us. But I'm sure we can both relate, that like, when you are a powerful black or woman of color or brown woman of color, like, people are extra... scared.

Mack: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

Alba: When you have an opinion, when you voice your opinion, when you're smarter than them, when you're more educated, when you have vocabulary that people don't know. They're like, "oh, hmm, I don't know, you're a bitch." [laughs] It's like—

Mack: Yes, yes, I am. Continue. [both laugh]

Alba: And what?

Mack: There's a quote from Angel. Cordelia's talking to some character that's been taken over by like a demon. And she literally goes, "you are a vicious hell-bitch. Remember that." [both laugh] And I was like—[slow claps] that's the best pep talk I have ever heard. [laughs]

Alba: Hell. Yes. Hell yes.

Mack: And that stuck in my mind. So when guys would call me that in college, I'd be like, correction: vicious hell bitch. [both laugh]

Alba: So I guess maybe a bit more about your work specifically, and then a bit more about my work specifically?

Mack: Yeah, so my work specifically is—it's community-based. So Alba and I are definitely working together, 'cause Alba's part of the production team. And I'm sort of—I'm tangentially part of the production team, in that we're trying to build everything into the structure. But a lot of my work is community-based. So it's bringing the community up to speed from being simply "black lives matter, because obviously we're not racist," to "okay, black lives matter and also, I have to work on myself continuously because ally is a journey, not a destination." Right?

So within the community, you know, I float around and I definitely do respond to threads. But I'm also there because sometimes people say things that they don't understand are perpetuating racism or prejudice, or they're not thinking through how the impact could affect different people across different—even socioeconomic levels within race.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Which I think is also a conversation that Buffy never really has. 'Cause there's not really enough black and brown characters to discuss that. And also, like, 'cause I'm doing the book club so that we can all have a really good base of like, feminism isn't just all the stuff we learn in school.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: About the women's march and suffragettes and Gloria Steinem. It's not even stuff that you would read in, you know, Ms. magazine. Right? It's living and breathing and the conversation has shifted and it's mostly taking an online presence. So I—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: They're called public academics. So people like Dr. Yaba Blay, who I hype up all the time. And so we're having conversations around those books and going, here's where feminist discourse is now. So Buffy was considered very feminist. To an extent, it was. But here's what the conversation is now, here's the inclusive conversation we're having. So look at this thing that you love, see how much of it has translated into what's happening now. And moving forward, understanding that just because you came from some place that may be imperfect does not mean you can't move yourself closer—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: I would never say anyone's perfect, but like, you can't move yourself closer to being in, like, right relations with people—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Our book is Hood Feminism, right? And it's literally called "Notes From the Women that a Movement Forgot." So looking at a lot of Buffy conversations, it's about—you know, Buffy was a middle—I'm gonna say upper middle class, if her mom was running an art gallery. But what about the people that the movement

forgot? And I think, by reading Hood Feminism, even though it's specifically about women of color and black women specifically, I think after going through it with the book club, people will realize, look at every other woman in Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

Drusilla's clearly—I would say she was maybe a bit autistic, somewhere on that spectrum, and was turned. And think about how she was treated within her world of richness and luxury and glory. She was locked away. Right? A forgotten woman. Look at even Willow. Right? Poor, mousy Willow was often forgotten by Buffy, until Buff—until she could not be ignored anymore. Like, if you look at all of the female characters throughout that show, you could absolutely apply things from Hood Feminism. They're the women that the movement forgot—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: But you can still watch their journey. But you don't know to look for it, because the advertisement is a blonde girl.

Alba: Yes. Yes.

Mack: So I think that's also a lot of my work, is like, who are you watching?

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: It's like Harry Potter. Like, nobody actually—this is a quote from Jenny actually. Like, nobody actually reads that for Harry Potter. [both laugh]

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: You're there for Ron, you're there for Seamus and Dean blowing stuff up, you're there for Peeves the Poltergeist. Like...

Alba: Or Hermione and her like, general bad-assness.

Mack: Look, every time she gets separated from Ron and Harry, it's 50 pages of them fucking up. Until she comes back. [both laugh]

Alba: That's so true!

Mack: They can't function without her and it's really kind of cute. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah. And I think it's a really—it's a really good point of like, Buffy being this white, blonde girl. And it's a reason that my mom, like, confessed to me recently—like, I knew she was apprehensive about me watching the show when I was—when we first started watching it. She was like, I don't know if I like this show, I don't know if I'm gonna let you watch this. My mom is a mom of color who was very involved in what I would consume, and I was not allowed to watch certain things unless I had permission and I, like, did not have cable. The media that I was intaking was very, very curated, on my mom's side. And she confessed to me like, really recently, she was like, well, yeah, I was worried about you watching Buffy because I was worried about you watching this, like, small, pretty blonde girl and not really having a perception of, like, what... like, thinking that that would be your life, basically.

Mack: And that feels interesting—it's also, too, like... that's what a lot of girls who meet that criteria get out of it.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: But what I've noticed, talking to women of color, is we also recognize that she never fucking saves the world by herself. Ever.

Alba: Yes! No!

Mack: Like... as much as I hate Xander, he's annoying. [Alba laughs] Like, Xander literally saved her life. [laughs]

Alba: Many times.

Mack: [laughing] Quite literally, like...

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: At the end of the episode where she has to, like, send Angel to hell, and she has a moment of recognition. I was like, you realize that that was your teenage best friend, re-souling your boyfriend, honey. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah!

Mack: I think those are the things that other people recognize. They recognize that it's more of a communal thing, whereas Buffy holds onto that, like, white supremacy, "it is just me, I am the only one, I must do this." Whereas everyone

else is like, we're a community that works together, and we research things. And Giles—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Goes off and talks and things, and Anya uses her demon logic, and... I think a lot of people of color relate to it in that sense, of community.

Alba: That's absolutely how I interpret it—interpreted it, growing up, and what—you know, how it was discussed in my home, was this, like, community and like, I think a big point of the show is that, like, she survives so long because she has help.

Mack: Oh, yeah. She would've been dead. [laughs]

Alba: Not because she does it alone. Like, the whole point—yeah. Like, she doesn't die the first time literally because Xander is there to give her CPR. Okay, so. In terms of the work that I do with the podcast, it's—you know, I'm not so involved in the community. I think there have been moments in which I have been involved in community or like, public-facing announcements or messages, things like that. I feel like in the way that you're part of production, I'm part of like, the consulting aspect. It's like, we're like yin and yang. [laughs]

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: In that way, where like, each of us has a little role in each part. But for me, it's really about—as Mack mentioned earlier—kind of bringing that lens to each episode. So I like, watch each episode and I'm like, hey, there's this problematic thing here. Or like, Tara's hair is really weird in this episode, maybe we should talk about that. Maybe it's cultural appropriation. Or what language is Giles speaking here? Like, you know, let's talk about the historical impact of a gourd, because those things are really relevant to giving more presence to things that we often ignore or brush under the rug, that we don't see as important. Or that society—by "we," I mean like, society doesn't see as important, because of the kind of dismissal of other cultures that are not white or western or Euro-centric.

And so making sure that there's space for those conversations, making sure that there's research done into different aspects of the show and that Jenny and Kristin talk about it. Or that I get to come in and say a little something about what it was like growing up with dolls that didn't look like me. Or like, not wanting dolls that looked like me and how Buffy being able to have a doll that looks just like her is like a reflection of society, you know? And all these little things. So that's like really

what I wanna do and, you know, is obviously my background, because I come from a production background. And it's been, like, really rewarding so far. And I feel like I'm doing something that's like, important and impactful and it's so rooted in something that I love and has been such a big part of who I... am. [laughs] Who I've become.

Mack: Yeah. And like, what I see in that is so much of our media—like, we're mostly not passive consumers of media. Like, there are some people, but I think a lot more millennials are active consumers of media.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: But what happens is, they're active after it's... already exists, right? It's media critique. Pop culture critique is what I said that, like, I did.

Alba: Mmm.

Mack: And like, what you're doing is going, no, we're critiquing the media, before we put it out.

Alba: Yes. Yeah.

Mack: Like, yes, this is about an old show, Buffy, but this is a new medium and this is new media of podcasting. And so we are going to examine all of these things before we ever put it out to be seen. And I think that is, like, great work that I'm super stoked to be involved with. But also excited that I don't have to do the production part, so there we go. [Alba laughs] Thank you very much. [laughs]

Alba: Well, thank you, because I am absolutely not qualified to do what you do. Yet. I hope that one day, I will be. I hope that one day, I will be as qualified as you are.

Mack: See, I always tell people that like, it's not necessarily about being qualified. It's going, yep, I wanna do the thing.

Alba: Yep.

Mack: Because let me tell you. Find me a white man, anywhere, who's actually not qualified [Alba laughs] to do the thing, and has just instead—

Alba: Oh my god, you're so right.

Mack: Applied to do the thing.

Alba: You're so right. You're so right. Yeah, that's a really good point, and that's my—that's my white supremacy showing. See? It exists in me, everybody, too. So—

Mack: It exists in us all.

Alba: In us all. Alright, should we talk about... the elephant in the room? [both laugh]

Mack: [laughing] What has happened to us socially since starting the podcast?

Alba: [laughing] Yeah.

Mack: You go first, you go first. It's so much easier for you.

Alba: It's true. But it's so related to you, though. So you know, joining the podcast put me in a position of public eye. You know, not nearly as much as Mack or Kristin or Jenny, but you know, I've accumulated an extra, whatever, 200 followers on Instagram. Which to me, feels very strange. [laughs] I'm like, why are you here?

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: Like, happy you're here, but why are you here? I don't understand, but cool, cool, cool, like, whatever. And I had to leave the Scoobies of Color group that I'd been talking about, just 'cause it just, like, wasn't appropriate for me to be part of that group anymore, as someone who was like, very behind the scenes in the podcast. And they—I just realized, like, they really need to have—be able to have a safe space without me being like, conflicted on whether I should talk to Kristin and Jenny about something. Or like, get offended because, [laughing] you know, I did all this work on something and like, it wasn't received well. So I was like, you know what, that—I just can't really be a part of that community anymore, and that's okay. But it was something that I had to deal with and grapple with. Otherwise, it's been pretty chill for me so far. Sometimes I get, like, emails or DMs, that's been pretty cool. And sometimes I go into the comments and I, like, read them and I'm like, [fake giggles]. [Mack laughs] And sometimes they're terrifying. [laughs]

Mack: Yeah, don't read the comments. I told you that. I keep telling you, don't read the comments. And yet. [both laugh]

Alba: I know! I think socially, it's almost more of like an internal process for me, of like, okay, now I kind of feel more responsibility of what I put out into the world. And that I stay true and keep integrity to myself, but then also, the work that we're doing in the podcast. Making sure that that reflects in my so—in my outward-facing personality. So that's been an interesting transition. And then of course, you know, Kate Leth did a thing. [sighs] And we had to have, like, an emergency meeting and come up with a document to put out. But I'm—like, Mack, you, please, talk about it.

Mack: I keep telling people, like, I'm not sure how we got here. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: So for those of you who don't necessarily keep up with anything other than just listening to the podcast, which is a completely legitimate way to live your life, by the way. [both laugh] So Kate Leth used to do fashion segments, but that was eliminated a while back. And I have never worked with Kate during Buffering, and actually, while we have orbited each other socially in Los Angeles for about ten years, I sort of just stayed away from her. We don't—we have mutuals, but like, we don't chill.

Alba: Yeah, I think—important to say, that neither of us has worked with Kate.

Mack: Right, and one of the processes that we were going through with doing, like—essentially an audit of Buffering. And so in the process of auditing, we sort of went through—alright, what are things that we have to address? We have to discuss Kate. Because this was the point in which Kate had dropped a slur about the Romani people, in a comic.

Alba: Yeah, and just so you know, I think like, a lot of people don't know that that's a slur.

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: But it is. So... the G-word—

Mack: Yeah. Well, I think it's also used in Buffy when discussing Angel's soul.

Alba: Yeah, for sure. Oh, yeah. Always, yeah.

Mack: [laughs] Yeah, so it's a slur and it's got a really, really nasty history, and the proper name is Romani. Kate chose to not just drop that slur, but to do it in a comic where—that discusses being a sensitivity reader. And then has her character, who

is the sensitivity reader—the character being herself—also drop the slur. So the internet was like, abso-fucking-lutely not.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: So we're like, okay, we need to address the fact that like, Kristin and Jenny didn't know. We needed to address the fact that, like—you know, as white people, they had the right—they had the point of privilege to not know. And then, that's when the avalanche of "and here's all the terrible things she's been doing for ten years" all came out on the internet. So people were very deeply incensed at this point.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: All of her victims were people with less power than her. They were young queer people, they were young black women, all trying to get into an industry. And she had the foothold and the power, and that's why her victims—she chose her victims specifically. Because no one would believe them. Sound familiar? Like, I got issues with that.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: So like, but again, I was like, not my circus, not my monkeys. [Alba laughs] But one of our group members in the private Facebook group publicly posted a post, directed at Kristin and Jenny, that said, "hey, I really want to talk about why Kristin and Jenny haven't addressed x, y and z." So Kate is a part of this Facebook group.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: And she steps in. Again, this Facebook post is directed at Kristin and Jenny. Kate steps in to defend all of her racist behavior.

Alba: It's just about being accountable. You know?

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: It's just about being accountable.

Mack: And she wasn't.

Alba: And there was zero accountability. And I just—I wanna say that, like, there is a difference between an—like, saying sorry. Saying sorry doesn't really mean anything and excusing away your behavior is not an apology. And being accountable—like, a real apology is being accountable, is saying, I fucked up for these reasons. Not even for these reasons, no reasons. I fucked up, this is how, and I'm aware and I'm going to try to change, and this is how I'm going to try to change. That's true accountability. So I don't want anybody getting confused that the post that she put in the Facebook group, which I know a whole bunch of people have gone and read. I just wanna be clear that—like, so people don't get confused, "oh, but she apologized. Like, she was apologizing for the stuff she did." No. That was not an apology, that did not excuse the things that she has done.

Mack: [simultaneously] And it was always—

Alba: And that was not being, like, an honest, open human.

Mack: Yeah. It was always a, "I'm sorry, and."

Alba: Exactly.

Mack: "I'm sorry, but."

Alba: "I'm sorry, but" and that's not "I'm sorry." That's not "I'm sorry." That's "but."

Mack: And there was a lot of, like, "well, I'm trying and I'm learning." It's like, ten years in queer, arty, POC spaces, you haven't learned anything? Really. Second of all, the world is on fire. You still haven't learned anything? So I was asleep, because I'm on LA time. [Alba laughs] So I just got text messages from Kristin, going—

Alba: [laughing] Yeah, first thing in the morning.

Mack: "Okay, this is happening." And I was like, okay, great. And this was just when it was just the post by the group member. [laughs] And then, she starts texting me in the morning, my phone starts going off, again. And I'm like, the fuck is going on now? And she's like, okay, so Kate responded. And I was like, goddamnit. And at the same time—and this is the only funny part of this, is at the exact same time, Kristin and I opened Facebook and saw that Kate had used me and another [Alba sighs] staff member's faces. So at the same time, first thing in the morning, almost zero coffee in my body, [Alba laughs] I was like, this bitch did what? And like, that was my immediate reaction and I refuse to take that back. My immediate reaction was "this bitch did what?" [laughs]

Alba: Unacceptable.

Mack: And what she did was, she took my face, my words, my work that I'd been doing with Buffering and the work of another black woman. And again, something people keep asking, no, I will not name her. No, I will not pass that information forward. She has made the choice that she does not want to be publicly involved. And as you will hear subsequently, there are very good reasons why. And I was pissed. Because a white woman, when faced with her own racism, tried to use two black women to shield her.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: I ain't your mammy. This ain't *The Help*. [Alba laughs] We don't do this. Right? [both laugh] And so, I tried to keep it super professional. I didn't call her out in that space. I messaged her privately and told her expressly—like, if you check the receipts that I have left on my highlights on Instagram. And I just said, hey. I'm not here, working for Buffering. This is personal. Like, my personal work as a consultant, you done fucked up. So here's what you—this is why this is wrong. Here's what you need to do. And again, she came with a, "I've been reading so much and learning so much and all—" and I was like, bitch, I just want an apology. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: I don't care about your feelings. That's not what I'm owed. I'm owed an apology. And she tried to do a private "I'm sorry." I'm like, you exposed me. You have 20-something-K followers on your Instagram. You had 85.5 *thousand* Twitter followers.

Alba: Mmm.

Mack: You don't get to use me and expose me to all those people, and mess up my rep by associating me with a racist, to a combined almost hundred-thousand people, and quietly apologize in a message. [clapping as she speaks] The apology must be as loud as the disrespect.

Alba: Mmhmm. [Mack laughs] Yeah.

Mack: For the record, as this—and so she couldn't act right. And so I made a video. And originally, I made the video because I knew people who can hire her and can—I know people who have drawn for her and can draw for her, and who can also

tell her "no" later down the road. And I said, look. She doesn't want to apologize, then there needs to be some sort of impact. And if I can't have any impact, I know people who can. So that's why I made the video originally. 'Cause I had 500 followers. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: I just happen to know some people who could either talk to her.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Or you know, to have this question come up when she's being interviewed. And then it exploded.

Alba: [laughs] Yeah. Literally.

Mack: Exploded. Yeah. I went from 500 followers on Twitter to I think I have 1200, 500 followers on Instagram to—I have well over 2000. I mean, in 48 hours.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: My DMs were full.

Alba: It was 48 hours, yeah.

Mack: Yeah. My DMs were full, like, I turned my phone off because it kept beeping. I had blue-check Twitter coming for my neck. [laughs] Like, her blue-check friends were trying to say stuff—

Alba: Ooh.

Mack: And that was the social impact of doing this work, was suddenly, I went from doing my job to taking on an extremely well-known comic.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: And everything that comes with that. So that was every single blue check who came after me. People who lied and accused me of being a racist myself, hashtag Reverse Racism Isn't Real. I had thousands—

Alba: [laughs] It is not real!

Mack: Right—thousands of people—but what—like, what was the most devastating was I had people in my inbox saying, her behavior drove me out of the comics world. She harassed me to the point in which—some people had relapses and breakdowns. People weren't believed. They took lesser-paying jobs because they didn't wanna be anywhere near her.

Alba: Wow.

Mack: Like, that was what was most devastating, was I suddenly went from someone who was loud on the internet [inaudible] professionally to someone people were looking to—to fix this problem of Kate Leth. Like, it completely changed the landscape—like, my audience is different. The things that I say are different. People still have this sense of like, I am the champion for the underdog. And it's bizarre. And that was all in 48 hours. I—

Alba: It was really fast. And then—and also because we put out that statement. We like, wrote a statement with Jenny and Kristin, for the podcast, like, to say that the podcast did not support Kate and that what she had done was really, really wack. And that, you know, they were basically cutting ties. So that was a pretty big deal, and I think, after that too, like, I got like 100 followers that day. For—

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: Having my name mentioned.

Mack: On a side note. [Alba laughs] A very, very interesting thing was someone actually said that I handled the situation super unprofessionally and—

Alba: Oh, yeah?

Mack: Had tarnished Buffering.

Alba: [laughing] Oh, really?

Mack: Yeah. And had tarnished Buffering. What it is—and there weren't—and for every one person who says something out loud, there's four who are thinking it. And what I found so interesting about that was it wasn't that it was unprofessional. Oh, honey, I used all my five-dollar words and used every bit of queer and women's theory that I've ever learned to break that down for people. But I was *angry*.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: I wasn't nice.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: I wasn't the mammy, I wasn't any of the gentleness that people expect black women to swallow in order to make them comfortable in their anger. And like, that's part of the conversation that we need to have. Because that's why a lot of our black characters behave the way they do. Because Kendra fully should have whooped Buffy's ass. [Alba laughs] A couple times. But black women aren't allowed to be angry like that, right? We're nice and we're accommodating. Even if we do—

Alba: No, in fact, Buffy teaches her how to be angry.

Mack: Exactly. To which I'm like, what white woman in history has ever taught a black woman how to—really? Really. [Alba laughs] Buffy is allowed to be angry and her anger is fine. Again, Faith—coded as black—her anger is always condemned. Even if it's rightful.

Alba: Yeah, and it's always unjustified, right? It's always undermined as like, oh, you know, Faith, she's having a moment. And it's like, well, she probably had a lot of reasons to be angry that were valid.

Mack: Yeah. And so that was one of the also interesting points to me. It was just like...you know, hey, you should have handled being publicly mistreated more professionally. No, you mean I should have quietly asked the white woman nicely to apologize to me? When I said I'd—no. Like. I don't have to be nice to someone who used me and is racist. Like, that—nice doesn't get you anything.

Alba: Yeah and I wanna be clear about how, like, exactly what she did and why it was so problematic. Because I think people don't—have a hard time grasping—like, wrapping their heads around it. It's because she made it seem like she was part of the anti-racist work that had been done so far on the podcast. When I saw the screenshots, I was like, ohh, this bitch. [laughs] Because we had been working, actively—like, you, me, Mack, with Jenny and Kristin—for the past couple months. Like, as you said, doing an audit and really, really doing active work.

And I knew—and Mack knows and obviously Kristin and Jenny—that Kate had not been involved in any of that work. So for her to say and imply with her screenshots that she had been part of that work and part of that process—she literally took the work that Mack had done, because she used her face—the work that I had done, without knowing, because she couldn't be bothered—and said that she did it

instead. So anything—any good that came out of it—she just got to glorify herself, using a black woman and another woman of color.

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: And the labor that we had done. And that is the definition—

Mack: And it was a white savior way, too.

Alba: Of white supremacy. Exactly. That is literally it. Is that not, like, the root of everything? Is claiming work that you did not do and getting the credit for it. While other people—yeah.

Mack: [simultaneously] And with the implication that she stepped aside to give us space. To which I was like... you don't give anybody anything. Like, it's the implication of, not just white supremacy, but like, of white saviorism.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Which was also a huge problem. And what I think people also fail to understand, too, is it's the first time. This is just—we're the ones who had the platform to say that this was wrong. So I think also a lot of people are like, well, it doesn't seem like a big deal, because for them, it's a one-off thing. I think for those of us who are women of color, we know—

Alba: Yeah, we know.

Mack: This is not the first time this has been done to one of us. And even—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: You know, Jenny and Kristin working in the areas that they work also understand, this is not the first time something like this has happened. They learned, you know, in real time. So like, that's also part of it, too. And you know, I have the quote—it's literally, like, my opening thing on my highlights is by Zora Neale Hurston. "If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it."

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: And that was the root of what it was. Yeah, I could have kept it very quietly in that message. And Kate—

Alba: And protected her, like, right?

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: As a result, protecting her and her actions.

Mack: Coddled her whiteness.

Alba: Coddled her, and then she could have, like, made a really nice public apology, when the fact that what she did was really, really fucked up.

Mack: Yeah. That fucks with my bag for a while. A hundred thousand people have me associated with a racist, and I will have to explain that every time I go for a consulting gig. The quietness that people expect to coddle whiteness is at the root of also the discussion that we're having, right? Because a lot of conversations have come up in our space that are some of the more, like—I don't wanna say divisive. But like, either uninformed or reactionary responses are rooted in their whiteness is no longer being coddled. They're like, wait, I can't just watch this blindly and not think about it? Like, you're gonna make this political? Yes. Everything is political.

Alba: Yeah, baby, because my whole life is political!

Mack: That part. [laughs]

Alba: [laughing] I don't have the choice.

Mack: Yeah, I'm like... [laughs] yeah, so. The Kate thing is also rooted in that. And also just the fact that, like, she sucked so much air out of the room. Like, we're still—[Alba laughs] we have to have this conversation.

Alba: Yeah. We do. We do. We have to have it.

Mack: You know, I had to make that video. And then I had to make a second video, 'cause nobody could act right. So it's like, that's what Kate did. Like, it's also the ramifications of her racism and behavior. And instead of just doing my job I'm paid for, there's all this excessive emotional labor—

Alba: And I think, like, we talked about this, but there's such a big difference doing anti-racist work and the work that we were doing before we had to deal with Kate. And then, all of the work that goes into responding to racism and how much public space that takes up. And what gets the spotlight, right? Like, everybody became a

patron so they could read—well, not everybody, whatever. Like, a few people became a patron so they could read the Facebook comments. But how about, like, becoming a patron because you know that Kristin and Jenny are doing anti-racist work and hiring me and Mack to do that work? What takes up space? What takes up light? What are people attracted to? And it's taxing. I think it's taxing for us.

Mack: Yeah. A hundred percent.

Alba: So much to reflect on.

Mack: Yeah, and I think—and I think a lot of people have really good intentions. Like, I love when people are like, hey, I just have this question and like, I will like, Venmo you ten bucks. And then like—I mean, if I can just save it for the next live that I do, like, that's also fine. But like, I appreciate that some people are just like, I don't know and I can't find a good place to get that question answered. And those are things that I love, right?

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Or when someone's like, I want to do further reading. Like, I consider that like the extra labor of like, getting people on along the road. It's the stuff where, you know, people have real big opinions. [laughs] I remember people questioning your credentials. I talked about that in the live.

Alba: Mm, yeah.

Mack: Like, they also checked my credentials. But like, when you go back and Google me, like, I have worked for and written for some heavy-hitters. So like, you get put in your place real quick if you question [laughs] my pedigree, if you will.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: People were actually asking, like, what made Alba qualified to get her job? To which, I would like to reply... Alba—this is not Alba, this is all me going, do you ask white men why they're qualified to talk about race? Do you ask Brené Brown why she's qualified to talk about it? Do you ask Busy Philipps why she's qualified to do it? [Alba laughs] Hell, are you asking Kristin and Jenny why they are qualified to try to change their podcast, instead of just shut it down? No. You know why? Because when you're a person of color, you can target another person of color, rather than getting pissed off at the white people who actually have the power. That's shitty. And that is what is happening. Like, [clapping while she speaks] that is enacting white supremacy, even if you're a person of color.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Like, what were the rules? You did—did you follow the right protocol? Like, those are all markers of white supremacy.

Alba: Yeah. Talking to you has been so great, 'cause like, you've just been like, no, Alba. Like, fuck them, you're qualified. [laughs] Like, you're so qualified.

Mack: Literally, no one is qual—look, everyone has to start somewhere. And this idea that you need a certain amount of pedigree to get anywhere is bullshit.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Some of your greatest coders who created apps are literally kids in their room. And I'm not talking the rich Silicon Valley kids. I mean the kids who built the app to help kids find lunch partners were kids in a bedroom, with no training.

Alba: Yeah, and—

Mack: The kids who started the Parkland protests were kids who were on, you know, Vine a couple days later, who sat on a floor with their parents and said, we're gonna create a march. We're gonna go to legislators and we're gonna change the world. And guess what? They did. Pedigree means nothing. Your training means nothing. You start where you start and you are *qualified*. That white-people-you-need-a-degree nonsense? Has gotten us nowhere. Zero places. But guess what? The recent protests got us somewhere.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: Marches on Washington got us somewhere. The protests in Taiwan got people somewhere. Abandon this idea... [laughs]

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: That you need to be *qualified*. And if you do have those issues, you do not take them out on your own people. You question those in, like, positions of authority. I'm hot about that, as you can tell. [both laugh] It makes me [clapping as she speaks] so mad. [laughs]

Alba: I appreciate it, 'cause I'm not that mad. I'm still like, "I did something wrong." But—

Mack: You did not do anything wrong. [Alba laughs] No, you didn't. Nope, nope. You will not hold other people's shame. Mm-mm.

Alba: Yeah. Alright, I think—

Mack: Look, I might use Brené Brown as an example, but I have read her stuff. [Alba laughs] Her and Glennon Doyle, and their conversations around shame. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah, and I think—of course, I think for me, something that's changed is like, my responsibility towards other people of color, in—within the Buffy community, within the world—is like, my greatest fear is that I will somehow offend somebody or let them down. And I don't wanna do that, but also, like, I am just a person and a human, doing the best with what I have. Let's just all remember that, like, none of us are perfect.

Mack: Yeah.

Alba: You know, we all make mistakes and like, every conversation—we say things that are accidentally racist.

Mack: Mmhmm.

Alba: I have, for sure. We all have blind spots.

Mack: Yeah and I think also part of this process of anti-racism and anti-racist work is we're gonna have to like, work on learning the difference between criticism and critique. Critique has the intent of being... bettering—

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: People, of going, hey, I noticed this. And I think—it made me feel this way, and I think this would be better. Or I just feel some type of way and I'm not sure how to communicate that or how that could be different. And then there's criticism, which is what you and I are getting.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: We're just getting mountains of criticism. "You are doing it wrong, you are doing it bad, you are unqualified, you are unprofessional." [laughs] Like... people haven't gotten to the critique part yet. [laughs]

Alba: Mm. Give us something constructive, we'll take it! We want it.

Mack: Yeah. Like, someone was like, hey, you need to have transcripts and captions for your videos. And I was like, great, awesome, I can make that happen. That is a critique that I can take and do something with. But people are really uncomfortable, I think, with the changes. And so they're criticizing a lot more than they're critiquing. I would love more people to critique rather than criticize. I appreciate more voices and conversation. I don't appreciate more antagonists in an already antagonist-filled situation.

Alba: Yeah. And you know, I think—speaking for myself, but if there's anything I can do to help you out, like, please let me know.

Mack: I will definitely let you know and same. Like, if—you know, if I need to have a, we're acting out in front of company. [both laugh] Let's behave. I can also have that conversation.

Alba: I'm super excited to keep working with the podcast. I cannot believe—like, I'm like—I'm like, working these days, watching Season 6 and prepping. That's my job.

Mack: Yeah, right? I'm also going—

Alba: That's what I do now. [both laugh]

Mack: I'm watching it, taking note—first of all, I don't think I've ever taken notes on Buffy, and I've written about Buffy. And I'm now going, okay, so for Season 6, we need to throw this in there, we need to throw this in there. [both laugh] Like, Jenny, you need to have a jingle for just this specific episode. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah. Yeah. It's exciting, it's really exciting. And I'm excited to see how the community changes and grows and how we can, you know, move forward together. Together, as a team. Team effort.

Mack: [singing] We're all in this together! [laughs]

Alba: You wanna be part of the team? Yeah, like, that's it. If you wanna be part of the team, you're welcome to be part of the team.

Mack: And also, I think too, one of the hang ups that people are having is that we are focusing on black. Which makes people uncomfortable, right? Because anti-blackness runs through every culture.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: And it was made so by colonialism.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: So like, people are very uncomfortable with the focus on blackness and that like, the loudest voice, doing the work, is a black voice.

Alba: Obviously.

Mack: And that like, white people are going, yes. This person holds power. We are in agreement, yes. And so I think that deeply makes people uncomfortable, but what they're missing is like, when you deal with anti-blackness, you deal with everybody else's stuff too.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Because the model minority myth that hurts Asian folks was created directly in opposition of black people. Like, that is the history of that.

Alba: Yeah. Yeah.

Mack: Light-skinned, blue-eyed—

Alba: For sure.

Mack: You know, Mexican folks are held up on high because—

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: A whole lot of the Spaniards that came over—Spain was ruled by the Moors, who were black. [laughs] So when some of those conquistadors came over, they were black. They married with black slaves. So that's where that colorism came into play.

Alba: Mmhmm.

Mack: So like, black liberation is deeply tied to everyone's liberation.

Alba: Mmhmm, absolutely.

Mack: So like, as we're doing this work for black people, we are 100% doing the work around other people. And we're gonna bring in other voices. But at this particular moment in time, when America's on fire because a man—for the second time, a man died saying "I can't breathe" and a father of six got shot in the back—

Alba: Unarmed.

Mack: We're gonna be talking about black people.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Yeah, unarmed—was shot in the back at point-blank range. We're gonna be talking about black people.

Alba: Yeah. When a young woman was murdered in her home, for no reason, by police. Like, yeah, we're gonna talk about it.

Mack: No. And her boyfriend was told that he could—

Alba: And her boyfriend.

Mack: Get a lesser sentence if he admitted that she's part of a drug ring.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: And he wouldn't. And he's going down for ten years.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: And I was like, A) that's a real one. Get you that kind of man. But second of all—[laughs]

Alba: Yeah, because he got a gun to *defend them*.

Mack: Yeah. So it's like—

Alba: Against the cops who were shooting. Like—

Mack: We're gonna be talking about black people right now. [laughs]

Alba: Yeah. Yeah, we are. We're gonna talk about black people.

Mack: And also, I know like, here in LA when they—they shot a young Latino man in the back who was running from them, and planted a gun on him. And the whole city came out and said, the hell you say? And mysteriously, the gun—no, he didn't have a gun—we didn't find a gun, despite that being reported days before. Despite it being reported that he shot at them. When the community came forward and said, you shot this child, no. You know. It is more and is bigger and once we do a thing, it spreads, right?

Alba: Yeah. Yeah.

Mack: Even if that's not what the media tells you. So I also think, like, people just need to get comfortable with the fact that dealing with blackness makes you uncomfortable, but examine why.

Alba: Yeah.

Mack: Who and what has told you that this is bad and who has told you that there's not enough? That if we are talking about us, that there is not enough for you. Right?

Alba: Yeah. There's still so much. I—like, I can't wait for all the other conversations that we're gonna have, because there's—

Mack: I feel like we should—we should do lives. We really need to do lives throughout the season. [laughs]

Alba: We should. We should do lives. We should do lives together. Yeah, that would be really good. Yeah, every—periodically and just talk about different things. And what—also, like, what's going on... globally. Alright, well. We're signing off.

Mack: Bye!

Alba: Oh, I guess you can find me—[laughs] where can they find us? [laughs]

Mack: Oh.

Alba: My Twitter is @amorenodaza, A-M-O-R-E-N-O-D-A-Z-A. And my Instagram is @AlbaDaza. And my website is albadaza.com. So you can check me out there. I

have a short film that's going to be up on the Ethnocultural Art Histories Research Instagram, which will probably be linked in the show notes. Thank you, Kristin. And that's where you can find me. There's where you can find my work so far.

Mack: For me, you can find me on Instagram, @mackmactalksback. M-A-C-K-M-A-C-talks back. And on the Twitters, you can find me @mackmactlks back, but there is no "A" in the word "talks."

Alba: Love it. [laughs] Alright, see you next time!

Mack: Bye!

Alba: Bye!

[CHIME]