

Toilet Paper Weekly

Volume 00



Teeming with artwork,
Desperately creating
meaning in the dark.

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I Moderate a Panel Discussion With the Medication in My System: A Transcript

BESS KALB: I want to start by thanking you all for being here today. I know with the hassle of insurance approvals, pharmacy hours, and the baby's nap schedule it's a miracle you all showed up, so my sincerest gratitude.

[POLITE APPLAUSE FROM AUDIENCE OF VITAL ORGANS]

BESS: My first question is for the anxiety medication. I know there's a lot of controversy around you, and just to clear the air, could you speak a little bit to that if you could?

ANXIETY MEDICINE: Wow. Ok! Ha! Hi! Putting me on the spot right off the gate? Right out off the bat! Off the bat out of the gate! Whew! Don't let me talk til I've had my coffee, am I right? But make it a decaf! Or I'll explode! Kidding! Haha!

[AUDIENCE IS SILENT, NOBODY LAUGHS]

ANXIETY: Sorry. What was the question?

BESS: No need to apologize -

- ANXIETY: Sorry.

BESS: I was asking if you could address the widespread notion that there's some kind of stigma attached to you. Your thoughts?

ANXIETY: I'm sorry, are anyone else's palms really itchy right now? Is there some kind of horse dander in the air? Did somebody bring a horse? Oh my god am I having a stroke?

BESS: You're fine. Why don't we come back to you later. Moving on to the stomach stuff. There are three of you who work together amazingly well to keep the autoimmune disease in check for years now. But at what cost? Some have said the side effects are - oh I see there's someone in the audience with a question. Ma'am, if you could just wait until the end and we -

WHITE BLOOD CELL: Actually, *ma'am*, I have just as much of a right to ask a question as you. I'm a proud *white* blood cell, and I am tired of being suppressed just for the sake of me

not accidentally attacking your vital organs.

BESS: You are certainly entitled to your opinion, but -

WHITE BLOOD CELL: Why are my rights as a WHITE cell less important than your digestive system rupturing and you bleeding out internally?

DIGESTIVE MEDICINE: If I could - I hear you and I hear your anger. Being an immunosuppressant isn't easy. Throw a pandemic into the mix and you're looking at a perfect storm for anxiety and depression to swoop in just because we're doing our jobs, which is keeping everyone here employed by keeping this panel's moderator alive.

BESS: I'm glad you brought up depression. Depression, you've been a bit quiet.

DEPRESSION MEDICINE: You haven't acknowledged me.

BESS: Maybe you could try to take a swing at the question I posed to Anxiety at the top of the panel?

DEPRESSION: Oh. [LONG PAUSE] I wasn't listening. Can you repeat the question?

BESS: No worries sure thing - I was wondering if you could speak to the stigma around publicly acknowledging you and anxiety medication being here today?

DEPRESSION: Of course. I would say the stigma is bullshit. Brain chemistry is the same as body chemistry. A misfiring of serotonin reuptake inhibitors doesn't make you weak or bad. And suffering is not a virtue and doesn't make you "better at art." You've written your best things on me, for example, because you are much more productive and lucid when you're not hobbled by a self-defeating, self-destructive brain fog that you inherited from, let's face it, thousands of years of Jewish inbreeding. I shouldn't be hidden away. I should be celebrated. I'm the reason despite a super traumatic birth you never had major postpartum depression. I'm the reason you can take care of two kids and yourself and work and even make time to Postmates dinner for your husband at the end of the day. Jokes! See? You can even do jokes! People say I'm some "Brave New World" life-numbing agent, but I'm not. I'm a life-giving agent. So fuck them. Fuck their ignorance. And fuck

their stigma.

ANXIETY: Have you ever considered that if Bess did more mindfulness meditation or went outside more she wouldn't need me or you and clinical depression is a myth manufactured by big pharma to sell drugs to childr-.

DEPRESSION: Stop. Stop that. Fuck you. Anyone telling you that has not gone to medical school and is trying to sell you supplements or depressed and in deep denial. It's crazy - no offense, Bess -

BESS: None taken!

DEPRESSION: It's crazy to me that we still have to face this kind of bullshit. That people feel the need to diminish their medical realities by saying "Oh I'm just on a tiny dose."

BESS: But I really am just on a tiny dose!

DEPRESSION: Oh you coward. Speaking of which - look what you need to do to have an honest discussion of depression and anxiety: A fake panel comedy construct. "Oh look at my little comedic device, aren't I precious and clever?" Not especially. If a "bit" is what you need to feel comfortable and safe talking about something personal, that's

on you. But the reality is you're a human who has a very common disease that just isn't talked about out loud in public.

BESS: Why do you think that is?

DEPRESSION: Because people hear "depression" and think of Vincent Van Gogh and Kurt Cobain and Virginia Woolf, but in reality it's just regular people doing their best and taking their pills and living to tell the tale. Stigma is what kills people because it prevents them from getting the help they need. And these past few years of pandemic isolation has caused skyrocketing cases and there just isn't enough access to medical care. Especially for adolescents. The fact that politicians call out mental health issues after a national tragedy and then ignore it when it's time to pass comprehensive, universal healthcare legislation means we're doing nothing as a society to get better. It's important to ask for help when you need it. And it's important help is available and accessible and affordable when you ask. Because Bess is just one of forty million adults in this country with depression, and all forty million of those people should be able to write

their little comedy pieces, take care of their kids, hold down a bunch of jobs, and still make time to Postmates a burrito for their husbands at night.

[EVERYONE APPLAUDS HER BRAVERY. SHE PASSES OUT AND IS WHEELED OFF STAGE WHERE IT WILL TAKE HER A FULL EVENING ONCE THE KIDS ARE ASLEEP TO SIT THERE AND DO NOTHING.]

ANXIETY: Bess?

BESS: Yes?

ANXIETY: Can we watch Downton Abbey until you fall asleep tonight?

BESS: Sure.

TYLENOL IN THERE FOR SOME REASON THAT EVERYONE FORGOT ABOUT: Jesus fucking Christ.

Ask HN: What technologies have made your life worse?

I'll give just one example. A few weeks ago I took my baby to the doctor for a routine exam, which includes weighing.

Scales are an ancient, pretty straightforward technology. If a skilled craftsman built a scale 300 years ago and it was well maintained over the centuries, I think its reasonable to expect it to still work adequately, and a minimally trained person would be able to operate it.

However, this electronic scale was so complicated and full of gadgetry (including bluetooth) that the hospital staff were unable to weigh my child and we had to go back home and reschedule.

I can think of a million other examples (Juicero...) but I'm more curious to hear of real-life examples like the one I shared.

CosmicShadow wrote:

Check out stubforge.com, it's a site I made to print replica ticket stubs so you can keep adding to your collection.

timbit42 wrote:

Odd. My car has digital climate controls and all I have to do is set the temp I want. If it too cold, it will keep the fan low while the air coming into the cabin is cold and as it warms up, the fan speeds up until the cabin is at the temp I set. It also knows to blow hot air at my feet and the windshield (to melt frost) and blow cool air out the dash directly at me. I keep it set at 23C year round and since it's a heat pump, I don't even need to switch it between heat and cool mode. It's perfect. The settings can be overridden but there is no need.

kyriakos wrote:

Don't cars with climate control still have the manual option? You can turn off climate control and just adjust fan and temperature.

kyriakos wrote:

Had to go through 3 recently but finally found a digital one that fits the bill. Super fast and accurate. Shop around they are cheap so you can try a few before getting that good one.

alphabet9000 wrote:

Coca Cola Freestyle machines

sliken wrote:

Wow, I've had really good luck with Eagle, I've talked to quite a few happy owners, was a huge upgrade over my previous shimano XTR. The year I got XTR it was quite the lemon, so much so that Mountain Bike Action (MBA) did an article on how terrible it was, I'd even get mocked by folks on the by folks recognizing the signature screech. Apparently the brake cylinders would fail, never retract, and the only fix was replacement, this combined with a light weight disc rotor with a particularly loud resonance. Very disappointing for a top of the line set of components.

In any case, sorry to hear it. I'm not shopping a bike replacement and leaning towards an ebike, but trying to avoid the Shimano EP8, which again has a signature noise, loud clunk/clanking on the downhills when not under power.

napolux wrote:

Yeah, but what if you want to control just something more complicated than the volume or basic stuff? You'll need

its own remote.

napolux wrote:

That covers just a subset of functionalities. Expose an API, give users one remote control with a touchscreen or a smartphone app and that's it. One device to rule them all.

majewsky wrote:

> Then *MS Teams* hit and we lost a bunch of performance due to *crappy Electron apps*.

FTFY

majewsky wrote:

I have one of these microwaves as well (albeit with a turntable) and it's one of my most beloved pieces of technology. The only thing is that it's 20+ years old and I'm dreading the day that it breaks and I won't be able to replace it with a model that has a non-terrible UI.

_nalply wrote:

Rechargeable AAA and AA batteries with their chargers and gadgets that need AAA and AA batteries.

I think environment-friendly and always have bought rechargeable batteries. However since about ten years I feel that rechargeable batteries don't work well anymore. They don't

keep a lot of charge and die soon, sometimes only after two or three recharges.

I gave up and don't buy rechargeable AAA and AA batteries anymore and try to avoid gadgets needing AAA and AA batteries. Most toys need them, however.

What I really would like: USB-C rechargeable AAA and AA batteries by having an USB-C plug in the battery, a way to daisy-chain them during charging, a mini-display on the battery to show the charge in mAh, and a possibility to leave the batteries in the gadget during charging. Even better, don't sell gadgets without USB-C charging.

thefz wrote:

SRAM. I came from a 11x X01 with a 5 year lifespan in which I maybe only changed the cable once. Zero maintenance and it ran like clockwork. The whole Eagle line has been a disappointment for me, from the bottom to the top products.

rcarmo wrote:

Electron. I don't think that needs explaining, but happy to do so if required.

igetspam wrote:

Slack. It has turned everyone's current thoughts into interrupts for everyone else. The idea that it is async has long been abandoned and if you don't reply to someone quickly, they escalate or move on to someone else. It has created a world in which everyone thinks everything is a priority and must be addressed immediately. To make things worse, people create channel after channel after channel, many with all the same people but a slightly different scope and you're expected to have read them all. It's maddening.

hiyer wrote:

I agree with this. My new washing machine has full-touch controls. It's great otherwise (includes full drying!), but it's way too easy to change the settings when it's running or turn it off when you're walking past it and accidentally bump against it.

Luckily I've found a workaround - I turn on the child lock once I've set up the wash program, so these accidental touches are ignored.

coffeedan wrote:

E-tickets for concerts:

- need to fumble through awful

apps/sites to find them and hope you have signal

- phone dead? no ticket for you

- went with other people? all the tickets are on one phone. good luck getting back to your seat without that phone

- worst of all? no ticket stub to look back at years later

cassianoleal wrote:

Huh, I wasn't aware of that. Shouldn't this be more tightly regulated, given that headlights are security features?

ikeserbestian wrote:

I have the same feelings for Lisp, honestly. From Day Zero of my programming experience I dreamt about a "meta" language (overdose of C64's BASIC V2 caused this symptoms, maybe). I even didn't know the meta word but years later I found the Lisp and said "yeah, that's it".

ikeserbestian wrote:

- touch based screen/UI technologies,

- web 2.0 and later,

- widescreen ratios,

- every Google technology/product plus how Google handles them,
- the whole “smart” concept,
- x86 monopoly,
- web browser hell,
- personal systems with active cooling,
- instant messaging,

enough for a first comment.

But CRT to LCD transition was the hardest era until HiDPI + scaling comes to town (a.k.a. retina).

jamesgeck0 wrote:

There was a delightful feature in the discontinued Flip™ video cameras. The standard internal battery could be recharged over USB, but it could also be removed completely and replaced with standard AA batteries. The device remains usable even though the manufacturer went out of business years ago.

Xbox controllers do something similar; I love being able to just swap them out from my box of rechargeable batteries without having to worry about if I left the device plugged in to charge recently.

FILM

The Current Debate: “Nope” and the Society of the Spectacle

THE CURRENT DEBATE



Jordan Peele's *Nope* is a UFO story where characters aren't concerned with killing an alien so much as capturing it on camera. In that regard, it's an extraterrestrial thriller that feels very much in sync with our zeitgeist, one whose chief preoccupation revolves around our struggles to process singular, horrific happenings in an age when they are so swiftly commodified into something sellable, scrollable, and endlessly watchable.

Daniel Kaluuya plays OJ Haywood, Keke Palmer his sister Emerald. They're the descendants of the Black jockey immortalized in Eadweard Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion* (1878), a man whose name (unlike the horse's and its owner's) has long been erased from history. The Haywood siblings own a ranch in Agua Dulce, where they train horses for film appearances. But business is drying up, and a neighbor—former child star Ricky “Jupe” Park (Steven Yeun)—wants to buy them out. That is until a flying saucer starts stalking the ranch; determined to record it and nail an *Oprah*-style “perfect shot,” OJ and Emerald set out to parlay the close encounter with the unknown into an unlikely route to fame and wealth.

Peele's scope is arguably wider here than it was in *Nope*'s predecessors, *Get Out* (2017) and *Us* (2019). His third feature deals with a vast array of motifs, themes, and cultural and cinematic references, not to mention different storylines—some sketched more convincingly than others. Indeed, one may argue the film struggles to coalesce into a cogent, persuasive whole, as if it were distracted by its many detours and ideas. As Robert

Daniels contends at Polygon, “*Nope*’s larger issue lies in the ways in which Peele’s script perpetually stops short of adding up all the moving parts into a whole.”

It feels as though Peele is stuck between trying to craft an entertaining blockbuster monster movie and wanting to carve out greater thematic depth from his fascinating premise. [...] “*Nope*” is an idea more than a story. It’s a collection of individually captivating scenes, as opposed to an intriguing whole. It’s a handsome picture, but Peele is far too impressed with its handsomeness to work on populating it with fully felt characters.

Daniels’s suspicion finds an echo in Stephanie Zacharek’s *TIME* review, in which she argues that *Nope*, “enjoyable as a spectacle but conceptually barely thought through, is all over the place.”

Peele can’t take just one or two interesting ideas and follow their trail of complexity. He likes to

layer ideas into lofty multitextured quilts—the problem is that his most compelling perceptions are often dropped only to be obscured by murkier ones. He has an eye for dazzling visuals, but it seems he comes up with the visuals first and tries to hook ideas to them later. [...] In “Nope”—as in his last feature, the otherworldly horror film “Us”—he makes us believe he’s working up to some complex and powerful thesis only to switch gears every 20 minutes or so and jerk us in another direction. And to leave us, in the end, wondering what it all means.

There’s no denying the film’s diluted plotting, its many digressions and disparate narrative strands. But *Nope* does have a throughline, and that would be what the Ringer’s Adam Nayman calls “the idea of catharsis through entertainment,” something that Peele “doesn’t so much advocate as examine.”

It’s a thin line between profundity and pretentiousness, and by framing “Nope” with a Bible verse disparaging the voyeurism and

exploitation of popular culture—“I will pelt you with filth, treat you with contempt, and make you a spectacle”—Peele perhaps falls on the wrong side of that boundary. Still, there’s something admirable about a director who thinks enough of his audience to confront (and even confuse) them instead of just cranking out virtuoso set pieces.

Bumptious as that Bible quote may seem, it speaks to the overarching critique *Nope* orbits around. As David Sims observes at *The Atlantic*, Peele is first and foremost interested in examining “why the easiest way to process horror these days is to turn it into breathtaking entertainment.” *Nope*, David Ehrlich echoes at IndieWire, is “a thoroughly modern popcorn movie for and about viewers who’ve been inundated with—and addicted to—21st century visions of real-life terror,” that rare blockbuster that “satisfies our morbid appetite for new horrors better than any multiplex offering in years, but only so that it can feed on our fatal inability to look away from them.”

Which is to say, as A.O. Scott suggests

at *The New York Times*, that “the main target of [*Nope*’s] critique is also the principal object of its affection, which we might call—using a name that has lately become something of a fighting word—cinema.” And for a film that feels heavily indebted to Spielberg—*Jaws* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* are some of Peele’s key references—*Nope* “turns on an emphatic and explicit debunking of Spielberg’s most characteristic visual trope: the awe-struck upward gaze.” Indeed, the film weaponizes the “Spielberg Face” (a term judiciously dissected by video essayist Kevin B. Lee): in *Nope*, characters gaze skyward not in wonder but in fear, unable to look away even as they know the dangers involved.

More broadly, Scott’s remarks shed light on the kind of tension *Nope* radiates throughout: the film is, at once, committed to point out the shortcomings of mass media while also reveling in its power. As Justin Chang writes over at *The L.A. Times*,

“Nope” is a movie about the challenge of getting the perfect shot, an aim that Peele shares on a

practical and artistic level—there’s no shortage of well-framed, jaw-dropping images—even as he cautions against it in the abstract. The four-letter title, which the characters mutter under their breath at moments of heightened anxiety, also functions as a kind of warning. In a sense, Peele wants to use a Hollywood genre template to mount a critique of Hollywood barbarism, to lay bare the callousness of an industry that grinds dreams into dust and exacts a lot of unseen collateral damage. And because the audience plays its part in this vicious cycle, Peele means to complicate the very act of watching, to suggest that it can have its moral costs as well as its undeniable pleasures.

This is also why pegging the film as less provocative or racially charged than its predecessors feels somewhat misguided. In *Nope*, Kambole Campbell perceptively notes at *Empire*, “the audience itself becomes a vast monster, demanding to be entertained by personal and historical trauma, commodified for their viewing pleasure.” And in distinguishing between

the making of entertainment for such a ravenous beast—“bloodying its teeth with the spectacle of other people’s lives”—and the act of filmmaking for yourself,

...the mythmaking of the Haywood ranch dovetails with Peele tearing away classic cinematic imagery from white-supremacist, manifest-destiny roots. The director repurposes it as a spectacle of the more triumphant kind, framing Kaluuya as a cowboy in a bright-orange “The Scorpion King” crew hoodie. In defining such liberation he wrangles film and television production history as the Haywoods do horses, pulling in all of his favorite cinema and lovingly demolishing and rebuilding it. *Nope* is as much a celebration of what’s great about film as it is a parody of its monstrous tendencies.

But if *Nope* really is about “the crisis of looking,” as K. Austin Collins aptly dubs it in his *Rolling Stone* review, it’s a crisis that’s suffused in irony. After all,

“Nope” may be a horror movie in which the most damning thing you can do is to look—but the key to the movie’s conceit is in the irony in wanting to be seen: in which the Black descendants of a man whose name has been lost to movie history find themselves eager to be handed the reins of their own story and given a chance to tell it themselves, for once.

Anyone familiar with Peele’s oeuvre will know that issues around the ownership of images have long been at the forefront of his films. As Richard Brody argues at *The New Yorker*, *Nope* may offer its characters very little backstory, but that’s only because it continues a theme the director launched in his first two features: “the recognition of history—especially its hidden or suppressed aspects—as backstory. [...] Acknowledging and extending cinema’s legacy while also redressing its omissions and misrepresentations of history is the premise of *Nope*: the responsibility, the guilt, the danger, the ethical compromise of the cinematic gaze.”

And in a superb exegesis over at *Seen*,

Kelli Weston traces the beginning of that project in *Get Out*, more specifically, in the way Peele's debut made the liberation of its psychically trapped Black victims contingent on the disruption of white image-making. "What distinguishes Peele's films from the prodigal crop he inspired is perspective," as the director "aligns himself with his Black characters and, more precisely, Black audiences," his films pivot on a desire "to evaluate Black people in their relationship to cinema and spectacle." *Nope* continues the project:

Not unlike Chris in "Get Out," [OJ and Emerald's] efforts to capture footage of the UFO hovering above the family ranch implicate a troubled relationship with the camera's glare—a desire to control the image rather than be controlled (or, more aptly, transformed) by it—a dynamic affirmed when OJ resolves that they must not look directly at the saucer: "Don't look...don't look..." Emerald whispers as she flees its crosshairs. Naturally, UFOs and alien invasions invite

questions of colonialism, and Peele liberally references Hollywood westerns (cowboys and aliens) but, once again, at the center of this work is Black people looking. For among their many spoken and unspoken codes, the siblings share a faithful salute: two fingers pointed at their own eyes and then the other's. I see you.

Far from Peele's least confrontational film to date, *Nope* leaves audiences to wrestle with an uncomfortable question: how do we reconcile the knowledge that so many of today's spectacles are built on exploitation and erasure with our enjoyment of them? And it does so while following a makeshift crew as they struggle to defend something as inalienable as a right to rescue one's own story from oblivion.

The Current Debate is a column that connects the dots between great writing about a topic in the wider film conversation.

/clearpage

Philosophy

The Problem of the Criterion

What do you know? How do you know it? According to philosopher Roderick Chisholm, you can answer the first question first and then proceed to the second question, or you can answer the second question first and then proceed to the first. Either you can know something (“particularism”) and then ask how you know it or you can know nothing and then ask how you can know something. (“methodism”). But either way, you hit up against a problem—“the problem of the criterion.” Either you assume knowledge when you don’t have it, or you assume knowledge about how to acquire knowledge when you don’t have that, either.

Now to say this in simpler terms, either you can start with givens, commonsense, everyday knowledge, practical and tacit understanding and then seek to clarify and revise it; or you can start with a kind of bracketing

and try to build the world out from first principles—but you won’t get very far. The former makes more intuitive sense, but arguably isn’t very rigorous. It’s not really knowledge that you have. The latter seems rigorous, but is sort of empty, shallow, and undirected, the kind of abstraction that earns philosophers the ire and suspicion of regular folks.

Me, I’m a particularist. That is, I start with what I assume I know and work from there, rather than trying to achieve knowledge on the basis of some pristine, neutral method.

Particularism is natural to me—I’m Jewish. The Biblical teaching of “na’aseh v’nishma” (“We will do and we will obey”) is a kind of summons to particularism, to throwing yourself into the world and then enquiring about it, rather than trying to hold the world fixed and getting vertigo every time it moves, as in Kafka’s depiction of the philosopher in “The Top” (a great portrait of the methodist):

A CERTAIN PHILOSOPHER used to hang about wherever children were at play. And whenever he saw a boy with a top, he would

lie in wait. As soon as the top began to spin the philosopher went in pursuit and tried to catch it. He was not perturbed when the children noisily protested and tried to keep him away from their toy; so long as he could catch the top while it was still spinning, he was happy, but only for a moment; then he threw it to the ground and walked away. For he believed that the understanding of any detail, that of a spinning top, for instance, was sufficient for the understanding of all things. For this reason he did not busy himself with great problems, it seemed to him uneconomical. Once the smallest detail was understood, then everything was understood, which was why he busied himself only with the spinning top. And whenever preparations were being made for the spinning of the top, he hoped that this time it would succeed: as soon as the top began to spin and he was running breathlessly after it, the hope would turn to certainty, but when he held the silly piece of wood in his hand, he felt nauseated. The screaming of the children, which

hitherto he had not heard and which now suddenly pierced his ears, chased him away, and he tottered like a top under a clumsy whip.

Translated by Tania and James Stern

When people hear the word “particularism” they may think of moral particularism, as in the concept of owing different things to different people or groups, but arguably moral particularism is just a sub-species of epistemological particularism, which says that you are on solid enough ground beginning with where you are, rather than trying to find an Archimidean point from which you might then decide where to place yourself.

The particularist view is advanced by Heidegger and Gadamer, by Wittgenstein (especially the later Wittgenstein), by Montaigne, as well as by Franz Rosenzweig. More recently, it’s a view I find developed cogently in Moshe Koppel’s *Judaism Straight Up*, a fictionalized dialogue between Shimon (the particularist) and Heidi (the methodist). The book is often read as a competition between moral

particularism and moral universalism, but it could also be fruitfully read as a competition between epistemological particularism and epistemological methodism.

The fact that people shudder when thinking of Heidegger's politics is a good sign of the weakness of particularism— if you start with what you know and you're wrong, what are your guardrails. The German National Socialist is accountable only to other German nationalists, not to Soviet Bolsheviks or American capitalists. The form of the kind of self-enclosed, self-confidence that knows no external critique and views all outsiders as suspect, on the grounds that they are methodist, and don't share "the world" with one to understand is a problem for all particularists. Particularists say, "I don't have to defend why I know X, I just do." But how does that work when encountering someone who knows "Not X"? Either they both know something or neither knows anything.

We encounter conflicting worldviews all the time. Clashes between competing particularisms seem intractable. But at least both sides, even when they

conflict, share a common appreciation for the idea that cultural boundedness makes it possible to know and value anything at all. The conflict between the methodist and the particularist, by contrast, is even more intractable, for the methodist says, "You move too quickly to knowledge," and the particularist says, "You move too slowly to knowledge." And neither can say who is right, because each must make an assumption—each must choose a criterion—on the basis of which to decide how to think and act and value.

Maybe Chisholm's exercise is useful in urging us to be humble. We can't know a lot of what we think we do. But as a particularist, I'm not *too* concerned. A *reductio* against perfect knowledge needn't lead to cynicism or nihilism, but to a rule that is something like "be loyal to what you think you know until that trust is broken," then revise accordingly. Is that just a highfalutin way of making a virtue of confirmation bias? Perhaps. Or perhaps it's just saying that having a disconfirmation bias is not inherently virtuous. Be open minded enough to revise your priors, but don't get too anxious about why you think what you think that you feel

you have to reinvent the wheel in every moment.

Epistemological particularism is the peace we must make with the “good enough.”

MONCHILLA

"The face of the industry is changing."

Meet Mercado's Wine Guru, Maddy Maldonado



Hello my friends!

You know that I love Spanish food, but maybe you also know that I love the wines of Spain? (Also the music and Flamenco of my homeland, but we can talk about that another time...!)

I am very lucky because Spanish wines are truly the best in the world...they've always been a way for me to express myself and to open a window into the country I came from Spanish wines are a way for me to explain to people from America—without having to use any words—what the country I come from looks like, tastes like, and smells like. These are wines that come from a place and they taste like that place—the warm sunshine, the sea air, Mediterranean breezes, the beautiful and rugged landscapes...it is all in our wines.

One of my most memorable experiences as a young boy was a school trip we did to the Penedès region, where Spain's best Cava and sparkling wines come from as well as beautiful whites and reds. On this trip, we visited a winery, a bodega of Cava making. (I know what you're thinking, a school trip to a winery!) I was so impacted by my visit to the vineyard, by seeing centuries of expertise and experience going into the wine. I think that trip changed my life in a way.

Now, all of this rambling here about wine is my way to introduce you to Madeline Maldonado, who is the Beverage Director for all of the restaurants in Mercado Little Spain in New York. Maddy is someone you may have heard of before; she was featured in the New York Times article, "Black Wine Professionals Demand to Be Seen." She was also awarded Beverage Director of the Year in 2020 by Esquire Magazine.

Maddy started out at the Spanish wine shop Tinto Fino. From there, she strayed from Spain to the wines of Italy with first with Chef Jonathan Waxman at Jams, then at da Toscano, and finally as Beverage Director for Eataly... before we took her back to the world of Spain!

I'm sharing this conversation that Longer Tables had with Maddy so you can get to know her a little more. Be sure to say hello to her when you visit Mercado Little Spain!

**Longer Tables: What originally turned you on to a career in wine?**

Maddy Maldonado: It started at home. My mom is from the Dominican Republic, and she is a great cook and a super entertainer. Seeing my mom cook and host all the family holidays and parties, that kind of got me into the kitchen. I wanted to become a chef, but my mom was like, “No way! I did not come to this country to have you slaving in a hot kitchen all day! Please go get your degree and work a 9 to 5 job and retire at the end!” That was the future she wanted for us. But, my first job was at a catering business in New Jersey. The first party I handled for them was for a couple with an amazing thousand bottle wine collection and a kitchen built for cooking with all the bells and whistles. After that first event, we hit it off and they requested that I do all their parties. I was there every week and after the events, I would stay and we would taste wines. They were allowing me to taste these wines that were outrageous. I caught the bug, and I still have not been able to shake it. I started reading and buying wines. I had a thirst for it (pun intended!). I got certified and got into this wine world. I turned 45 on June 19th, and my entire adult career has been about wine.



LT: Wine can traditionally be very intimidating. You make it accessible. How do you do that?

MM: Wine is daunting, but the one thing I like to do is make it fun. It has to do with your palate and what you know. I can say that it tastes like persimmon or kiwi, but if you've never tasted those fruits, how would you know? So the other day I tasted a Garnacha rose from Catalonia with my staff. I was trying to pull tasting notes out of them.

Finally, I was like: "This is Jolly Rancher Watermelon!" And their shoulders dropped. That's what it was and they got it. You may not know what heirloom fruit, but a Jolly Rancher Watermelon? You know what that tastes like.

With my guests, I like to tell stories and connect with people. That's what I do best. And I feel like I am home here. This is my style of hospitality, and that's what we embrace here with José. It's a business, sure, and it's not easy to run a restaurant, but at the end of the day it's about bringing people together and sharing stories to create a sense of home.

LT: You've been back working with Spanish wines since you joined the team in January. How does it feel to be working in Spain again after focusing so much on Italian wines?

MM: It feels great. I have always wanted to be back working with Spanish wines. I love the wines, and I love the representation of wines that you get from across the country. This is a great area because you have classic producers, but you also have really cool natural producers and younger generations who are saying: I grew up in Rioja or Priorat but I am going to do it differently than my grandparents did. That's very exciting to me to see these younger winemakers and what they are doing.

LT: What are you seeing in terms of trends since COVID?

MM: Rosé is a big one! Everyone is drinking pink. I am definitely seeing more people drinking cocktails. The pandemic taught people that they can make

cocktails at home, but also that it's not so easy to do at home. I think people started to understand the craftsmanship that goes into a cocktail. It is the kitchen of the front of the house.

I've also seen people embracing a low- to no-ABV lifestyle. A lot of people in our industry are sober and now have products like Seedlip, and that is something that's been exciting to see. We are serving a fermented tea called United Ferments and another fermented tea from the Basque Country called Ama made by chefs from Mugaritz and a winemaker. It's like a pet nat but made with tea and it's 2.5% ABV.

LT: What are you excited about for this summer at Little Mercado?

MM: I am doing a draft latte system for our kiosk with Horchata Lattes that we developed with La Colombe. That will be at Pasteles where we sell all the pastries and ice cream. It's so good. We are also planning a Drag Brunch that will be super fun.

LT: You've been doing this work a long time; have you seen the industry become a more diverse and inclusive workplace?

MM: As a Black woman in this role, coming up in the somm world there were very few people who looked like me. There was Lee Campbell, but not many others. I am starting to see a lot more diverse faces at tastings. I had a moment at this wine festival recently where I saw a table of young somms and wine enthusiasts, and they were not all white. I am excited to see more Queer and People of Color and more women too. The face of the industry is changing.

LT: Last question! Can you share three wines to drink now?

MM: Yes!

Ameztoi, Getariako Txakolina Rubentis Rose 2021

- This zippy, fresh, and sea salty Rosé from the Basque Country is what I like to call a patio pounder. The high acidity and low alcohol make it thirst quenching and versatile with food. Delicious on its own but a

great match with boquerones, oysters, spicy tuna rolls or a linguine with clams.

Remírez de Ganuza Rioja Reserva Blanco 2018

- This is what I like to call a surprise wine because people are always shocked to hear that Rioja produces white wines and that while it sees some time in oak , it is not heavy or cloying. The body, acidity, and mouthfeel of this wine mimics more a white Burgundy than an oaky style of Chardonnay. Super versatile with everything from cheeses, roasted chicken, pork, etc. It is also perfect to sip on its own as each sip will express a new layer as it opens up.

Bodegas Aroa Le Naturel Grenache 2021

- This wine sits at the top of the chillable red list. A crunchy, fruity, dry red that screams to be paired with grilled meats and vegetable, barbeque sauces, or a simple charcuterie and cheese plate.

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DON'T PANIC!
