

Episode 3.18 The Monáe Test with Taylor Crumpton

February 15, 2019

Hannah (Host):

[00:08](#)

[Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. And on the day I'm recording this, it's Valentine's Day. So Happy Valentine's Day. And also now you know how far in advance I edit these episodes. It's not far. It's not far in advance at all. Valentine's Day, I know it was a really fraught day for a lot of people, and just this morning and I was listening to somebody on a podcast say that it seems like people either love Valentine's Day or hate Valentine's Day, and I actually feel pretty neutral about it. It's a day. I know that it's nice for some people. I hope that it isn't not nice for you because in general I hope things aren't not nice for you. But I say worst case scenario, we all get to buy discount chocolate tomorrow and that's always an event to celebrate. So if you are listening to this episode on the day it's released, which should be February 15th, celebrate Day After Valentine's Day by buying discount chocolate in a box shaped like a heart. I can't wait to do that, honestly. It wasn't really a my plans, but now that I've described even chocolate out of a heart shape, I'm really stoked. Anyway, before we get into the episode, I want to replug the two events that I'm plugging right now. Apologies for the plugs, but listen, this is what podcasts are for. We plug live events. So first up there is the event that I am hosting that is about Canadian literature. It's happening on February 27th at the downtown branch of the Vancouver Public Library. It starts at 7:00 PM. There's going to be four amazing writers there; we're going to be having a conversation about CanLit. There's going to be cool books to buy. It's going to be awesome. I'll be wearing some very fun lipstick. I hope to see you there. It's a free event. And then second up on March 16th I have a panel at the Growing Room Feminist Literary Festival on podcasting and feminism with some other incredible panelists. That's 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM on March 16th. You can check out the Growing Room Festival program for full details, location and stuff like that, but that also promises to be a really great event. I feel like these intros are usually longer. What do I usually talk about? Nevermind. Let's just, let's just meet our guest. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Taylor Crumpton is a freelance writer who uses her platform to advocate for the lived experiences of Black women and girls and culture. Crumpton is a contributor to several publications including *Teen Vogue*, *Vibe Magazine*, and

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The Guardian, among others. [Music: "Learned From Texas" by Big Krit]

- Hannah (Host): [03:05](#) So welcome. Thank you so much for just being willing to be introduced to a total stranger on Twitter and then come on my podcast.
- Taylor: [03:13](#) You know what, some of the best friendships I've made have been through Twitter.
- Hannah (Host): [03:17](#) I mean, same and that includes people I've still never met in real life.
- Taylor: [03:21](#) Same. One of my like good friends, I have their phone number. Like we have mutual friends in common in Oakland, still never met them.
- Hannah (Host): [03:28](#) In the same city? Incredible.
- Taylor: [03:30](#) They're a ghost.
- Hannah (Host): [03:30](#) Yeah. And maybe they are, maybe they're just like a really convincing like Twitter bot that's like really got your number, but that's okay.
- Taylor: [03:40](#) Oh good. Someone called me a bot today cause I went in tweeted "#IhopelhaveBlackLGBTkids." And someone who quote tweeted it and with like "these bots are out of control." And I was like, "wow, somebody really thinks I'm a bot." Like, I have made it.
- Hannah (Host): [03:57](#) I did it. I what's the opposite of the, oh now I can't even remember the name of the test. The, the Turing test.
- Taylor: [04:05](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [04:06](#) Like what's the anti-Turing test where you are human convinced somebody else that you're actually a computer?
- Taylor: [04:11](#) Dirty computer. Shout out to Janelle Monáe. It happened.
- Hannah (Host): [04:13](#) Oh, we can call it the Monáe test! There we go. I'm proud of us. [Laughs] So I believe the origin story of, of this conversation is that you tweeted "more people should have me on their podcasts," and then somebody tagged me in and I was like, "I'm here. I'm here. I've got a podcast." I went and looked at your Twitter bio and it says bylines at *Teen Vogue*, *Playboy*, *Paper*

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Magazine, Hello Giggles, Bustle, Guardian, and Glamour Mag.
And I was like, "yeah, okay, well you seem very interesting."
Sounds great.

- Taylor: [04:48](#) You're like, "she's a writer or something." It's like, a little bit. You know?
- Hannah (Host): [04:52](#) [Laughs] Yeah. Just a couple, just a couple of places. So I want to start, cause I've seen, now that I get to spend a bunch of time creeping around on your Twitter page, I have seen that you do have a background in grad school and now are writing for like, all of these very exciting and non-academic platforms. So can you just tell us a little bit about sort of how you got to the point of being a freelance writer?
- Taylor: [05:16](#) Yeah, I would love to. So back in my undergrad days I was studying social work, psychology, and sociology. I'm like very much of a social services like, type of girl. Like, let's talk about epidemiology research and like racism and sexism. Like that is like my niche. So, I went to school at one of the most conservative Christian colleges in the United States. We had daily chapel, Old Testament, Bible Testament, Advanced Bible.
- Hannah (Host): [05:50](#) Advanced Bible.
- Hannah (Host): [05:50](#) Yes. I took ethics. So we would always have to talk about, "would you kill the fat man or not?"
- Hannah (Host): [05:55](#) [Laughs] Sorry I have no idea what the context of that is, but it sounds really bad.
- Taylor: [06:00](#) It's really terrible. And now thinking about it, I don't know if it was like, the fat man was on the train, or the fat man was like in a pool, but also in the pool there was a pregnant woman. It was just a lot. It was a lot. And around the time I was an undergrad was when Texas was going through a lot of like anti-abortion, anti-reproductive legislation, especially around the whole Women's Health Supreme Court case. So I was doing a lot of like abortion organizing work in West Texas, because before I was doing abortion organizing work, I was having like my little like, Angela Davis moment, which I think like, every Black queer undergrad goes, "I'm going to chop off my here, here's my afro, like let's talk about Black liberation." And that's what kind of led me to Twitter actually because I was trying to do all these actions and have it like uplifted because for Black students who are going to like, rural PWIs there's not a lot of on the ground support. So everything has to be, you know, amplify, amplified

through social media. And that's what kinda got me into like, really using Twitter as a platform to use my voice to advocate. So Twitter kind of led me and to, you know, write op-ed and like using media for advocacy, which I think is truly a beautiful thing for those who like, are kept out of a lot of those conversations. From then I was starting to, you know, really learn like the inner workings of how to get my voice out to those in legislation and those who are stakeholders. And I was really blessed to be part of this fellowship called Young People For that kind of trained me. Because before I was just kind of like the loud, angry student activist, but like I wasn't being sustainable, or taking care of myself, or like, you know, checking in with like other folks who have done this work before me who could really mentor me. And I went to this one training through the OpEd Project, which is used to train the folks from marginalized identities to get their, like writing out in national and local platforms. And it's funny because when I was a little girl, I like wrote this book called *Swim Girl* and I like, was like, "I'm going to be like a author," like, "I'm so happy. Like it's like a Black girl learning how to swim. This is my thing." Then in high school my AP lit teacher told me I had a terrible voice and like I should never write, and just like rip my whole entire like author dreams apart. But I was so blessed to go to this training because I was able to write about this experience had on campus where this girl offered me a DIY abortion solution of milk and bleach when she saw me leave my ex partner's house one morning. And I was so shook that like, people with [unclear] on my campus were making DIY abortion medicines, because also like there was no reproductive health services available for people on campus because you could be expelled for having sex if you got caught.

Hannah (Host): [09:01](#) Oh.

Hannah (Host): [09:01](#) I was doing all of this reproductive work, and I got trained to do this op-ed and it got picked up by *Glamour* around like the summer of when they were deciding. And I was so like, honored and like happy get this out there and that was like my kind of first entryway, but I didn't think anything about it. I was like, you know, this is really for the 5.4 million people of reproductive age in Texas who are going to lose care and like that. Those are my people. I care about them. And then like I think maybe six to eight months later, I was driving to my cousin's wedding in Texas and I was pulled over by a police officer because I was actually being pushed into the median by this 18-wheeler and I had to speed off from him because he had already knocked the mirror off my car.

Hannah (Host): [09:46](#) Oh!

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- Taylor: [09:46](#) And this was around the era of like, Sandra Bland. So like always being hyper vigilant of where I was. And he pulls me over and was just hella disrespectful. Like he was chastising me. He was looking at my chest. He drew blood when he took my driver's license to like, run it for registration or whatever. And he had like his hand on his holster the whole entire time. So here I am like, a Black woman in Texas. Sandra Bland just died. I'm just trying to see my family. This is actually an area of Texas that I'm familiar with, that back in the day with actually known to put nooses on Black people's like, necks and they would drive off in the pickup trucks to kill them. So I was so shook by that experience and so grateful to like, live from it that my go to is to write about it. You know, I was like, "I needed to get this out here and these people need to be held accountable. This is not just." And that police officer really could have like taken my life, and I even put in the piece, "I think like in that moment you could have been like the jury, the judge, and the executioner and like I would have no say." And I think that's when I like really started to define my writing voice where I was like, "this is something that I'm good at, that people are hearing and listening." And from there I was like, always on Twitter trying to find writing opportunities. I remember it was after Trump's election where like, it seemed like the world went to hell. Like it was just like...
- Hannah (Host): [11:21](#) I mean it did, right?
- Taylor: [11:23](#) I mean it did. It was already there, but it was like--
- Hannah (Host): [11:26](#) Somehow already as bad as possible and also...
- Taylor: [11:30](#) It was just a hot mess express. And there were so many editors that were like asking for pitches and calls. And I remember I was listening to, I think Nina Simone, it was like "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black," and I pitched this piece to Teen Vogue about like, what it's going to mean to be young, gifted and Black in Trump's America. You know, I was like, "what is it going to be for us who are, you know, always organizing and fighting and trying to uplift. And now we just have like, this heavily white government that's just after us for existing, for just being fully present in the world. Long story short, it didn't get picked up. Like, I got ghosted by *Teen Vogue* through little bit.
- Hannah (Host): [12:13](#) [Laughs] Rude.
- Hannah (Host): [12:16](#) [Laughs] Now I like regularly contribute, but I was emailing folks, I was like, "what's going on? Like no one's getting in contact with me," and they wouldn't respond my calls. And then one

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day like Philip put his email up on Twitter and I like tweeted him and I was like, "Hey, so I emailed this editor maybe like four or six months ago about this piece, what's going on?" And he was like, "she no longer works for us." And I was like, "Oh! Okay, like that's what's up." So he looped in all of these editors. And like, keep in mind, I was just finishing my senior year so like, I'd already been accepted to grad school. I finished my social work practicum. I'm preparing for a research conference. So I'm like doing this weird double duty like Sabrina the Teenage Witch, where it's like by day I'm preparing for like, an advanced masters program at like, the University of Pennsylvania and by night I'm like, responding to editor emails and I have like no formal training in journalism but like I really think I'm a good writer.

Hannah (Host): [13:22](#)

Yeah.

Taylor: [13:22](#)

And he linked me up with Allison Maloney who's the News and Politics editor at *Teen Vogue* and she was like, "I read your idea, we're looking for some people to contribute and I would love for you to, you know, do some of our smaller stories." And like when you're an undergrad and a senior at *Teen Vogue* is like, "I want to write for you." I lost my shit.

Hannah (Host): [13:42](#)

No kidding.

Taylor: [13:42](#)

Like, I like jumped up and down. Like my roommates were like, "are you okay? Like what's going on?" And like the first door I think I wrote about like, an alligator in Florida, but I was so proud of it. I was like, "I have a Teen Vogue byline. Like, I am fucking this shit up. Like, it's so great."

Hannah (Host): [13:59](#)

Okay. I read that piece and it's amazing because the girl in the piece uses like, skills that she learned at like, an alligator educational center to free her leg from the jaws of a gator. I was like, "what the fuck?!"

Taylor: [14:14](#)

Like, sis was popping. She really was like taking mental notes: "in case of emergency I'm just going gonna..."

Hannah (Host): [14:22](#)

Yeah!

Taylor: [14:22](#)

And then from then I think once Allison, you know, saw my voice and my craft. She really started sending more stories my way that, you know, centered Black women, which I love. I will always use my writing to centre our lived experiences. And like, my definition of Black women also includes trans and gender

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nonconforming folks, so also Black femmes. And from there I've just been really able to build a beautiful portfolio that I'm proud of that also, you know, talks about how these systems impact us, you know, especially in relation to like, policy and politics, which is my background. I went to an MSW program and I studied like, homelessness and like, affordable housing and how that affects you. So like anytime I can use that sweet MSW that I took a lot of student loans out for--

Hannah (Host): [15:10](#) [Laughs]

Taylor: [15:10](#) --in my my writing to inform like, my practice is very beautiful. But now I think, I feel like there's too many eggs in one basket. Like, there's so much politics from this administration, and to like constantly engage in watching that can be so draining.

Hannah (Host): [15:27](#) Yeah.

Taylor: [15:27](#) So I always like how pop culture is an iteration of our lives. So I've sort of been trying to do a little bit like pop culture and entertainment writing, because like, representation matters and from a young age that's also influential, maybe at some times as influential as policy. So trying to, you know, figure out how that advocacy work can also operate in like, these pop culture mediums. You know?

Hannah (Host): [15:52](#) Yeah. And that I found that really interesting when, when looking at your work is that sort of move back and forth between like, you're covering sort of contemporary political events and, and things that are happening, and then also, you know, writing about the Sabrina reboot and the representation of Black characters in that series. And that's really interesting to hear you frame that sort of adding pop culture into your work as almost a kind of relief from just like, the relentlessness of the 24 hour news cycle. Like, the same issues that you're concerned with in your work are still coming up obviously, but like, maybe it's, maybe it's less horrifying.

Taylor: [16:36](#) [Laughs] You know, it was funny, I tweeted the other day, I was like, "can some music editor hit me up cuz I'm tired about writing about like, white supremacy all the time" and this music editor from like, Vibe like, literally replied and she was like--

Hannah (Host): [16:47](#) Hiiii.

Taylor: [16:47](#) --she was like, "sliding into my DMs, sis." And I was like, "all right." So I actually been blessed to have a piece hopefully

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coming out next year for *Vibe Magazine*. Just very honored. I always like a challenge, you know?

Hannah (Host): [17:02](#)

Yeah.

Taylor: [17:02](#)

Music journalism, what? It's not like *Rolling Stone* or like the *New York Times*. I think people like very much dismiss it. So it's really like, an honor to get into an arena that I'm not skilled and trained in cause I was like, "oh wow, like y'all have a whole entire different toolbox than looking at policies and legislation," because music is so intimate that like, I'm really honored to be going into this like, new next journey.

Hannah (Host): [17:27](#)

Yeah, I find that the music journalism is such a, a fascinating genre and maybe it's for that reason. Like, as also an academic, like I feel like you know, we're trained in a certain level of research competency that basically any topic you are asked to tackle, you could be like, "I can do some research and figure out what's going on here and intelligently about this thing." But when you add art into the equation, there's a different skillset, and a different language, and a different vocabulary. And I think that a lot, I'm a literary scholar by training, and so I feel like I know what to do when I get a text, and I kind of feel like by extension I know what to do with a movie or a TV show is, especially when it comes to things like narrative and representation and politics and power and how these things play out. Right? Like you, you just kind of have a sense of how those things work. But music just feels like this totally different world. Similarly to art criticism, right? Like, when people speak intelligently about visual art and music, I'm, I always feel like they are tapping into some language that I, that I just don't have. I love listening to people speak intelligently about music cuz I can listen to something and be like, "I have enjoyed this but could not articulate to you why."

Taylor: [18:47](#)

Same, But music is so intimate. You know? It's like when you're in love for the first time and you can't stop listening to that one song. Like, you know, Cardi B is getting a divorce from Offset. So in response, I was listening to Beyonce's classic "Me, Myself and I," and I was like, "oh my god, this is so emotional!" And even Beyonce's vocals sound completely different like, from now. And I even like, transported back in time when I was a little girl and it premiered on BET. I remember the next day I went to school and broke up with like, my imaginary boyfriend. I was like, "it's over. Beyonce told me, myself, and I."

Hannah (Host): [19:24](#)

[Laughs].

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- Taylor: [19:24](#) Also she influences a lot of my relationship decisions. So hopefully as I get older I won't break up with people on demand because of her.
- Hannah (Host): [19:35](#) Okay.
- Taylor: [19:35](#) So it might happen.
- Hannah (Host): [19:35](#) [Laughs] Listen, you do what you're told. Did you hear? Probably you heard, but did you hear that she was playing a private concert at the wedding of like, the wealthiest person India?
- Taylor: [19:48](#) Yes! And I saw the guest list. It was like, Hillary Clinton, Nick Jonas, her mom, of course was there. Like, her booking fee is \$2 million. And I'm just like, "Beyonce, I love you." But then also like the radical in means like "God you're such a capitalist!"
- Hannah (Host): [20:06](#) [Laughs].
- Taylor: [20:06](#) "There's a caste system. And like, where did his fortune come from and like, who is marginalized by it?" So there's like, the Beyhive and then like, the social worker by training that is just like, "Ahhh!!"
- Hannah (Host): [20:17](#) I mean you reminded me right now if, I think I saw a lot of when "Formation" first came out, and then in another way saw a lot of when oh god, what was that video called? "This is America"--
- Taylor: [20:32](#) Mmhmm.
- Hannah (Host): [20:32](#) --came out. And the one I, I read the "Formation" ones more closely cause I always care more about women's art. But there was, there was a lot of like, Black feminist scholars who I follow who were watching that and reading it as a text and being like, "Black liberation isn't going to come via capitalism." And then a lot of other people being like, "would anybody who wasn't a Black woman artists be held up to this outrageous ideal that your art needs to simultaneously be incredible and also clearly articulate a political agenda for liberation?" Like, this seems like an awful lot. Like, are we leaving any space for people to just make art?
- Taylor: [21:10](#) I know! And I feel such a way about like, Beyonce and what she means for us like, as Black woman, what she means for pop culture and entertainment. And I actually, after her Grammy performance when she was like beautifully pregnant with Sir

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and Rumi, and she was like inspired by all of these beautiful brujas and like African Indigenous religions like Oshun and and you know Yemaya and her pregnancy pictures. I saw like, editors on Twitter again, you know, asking for pitches. And this was still when like, Teen Vogue wasn't powering back at me. So I have imposter syndrome, but I was like, "I'm going to shoot my shot." And I wrote this piece about like what that means as like, a celebration of Black motherhood. And how Black motherhood is intrinsically so magical because like we have the highest maternal mortality rates. And also like, what does it mean to bore a Black child into this world where like, on sight they're already like, dehumanized, and objectified, and vilified. And you're still making this conscious decision to bring this birth into this world. And how like, even that's reminiscent of like, the generations of Black women before us who were literally giving birth in shackles but found like, this beautiful kind of spirituality in that experience. You know? So I like wrote this piece, they also ghosted me. The continue to ghost me.

- Hannah (Host): [22:33](#) And yet so many platforms published shitty hot takes from white women about how she was presenting an unattainable ideal of, of pregnant aesthetics. Just the number of shitty hot take by white women that get published is just intolerable. [Laughs]
- Taylor: [22:49](#) I remember. I was reading them and I was like, :this got published and not me?
- Hannah (Host): [22:55](#) Yeah.
- Taylor: [22:55](#) Like, "are you serious?" But I felt like a, like an underground rapper, cuz I like tweaked it this summer. I was like rereading it and it was cute cuz I could like, see how much I had grown. Like, knowing the structure was off and like, the editing wasn't there. It was like, a very raw piece and I feel put it on like, Medium and I was like, "please read it." Like, I'm just happy it finally got out there.
- Hannah (Host): [23:15](#) Yeah. So, so now that you have been doing this freelance writing thing for a couple of years, do you feel like you are starting to get what feels for you, like a really particular voice or approach to the topics that you take on?
- Taylor: [23:30](#) I think in the beginning, you know, I was just so excited to be published that it was like--
- Hannah (Host): [23:36](#) "I'll do whatever you tell me."

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- Taylor: [23:38](#) Pretty much. Like I wasn't pushing back around like, my editors. If like they were like, "maybe you need to tone it down or soften it there," I'd just be like, "okay." Like, "Yes sir. Yes ma'am." You know, I'm just trying to get my name out there and you know, have people read my stuff. And now that I've kind of taken a more ownership of my craft, and especially for like, those who didn't go to journalism school or weren't formally trained there's kind of, you know, like the additional imposture syndrome. So it's like, I'm in this arena with folks who have gone to Columbia Journalism School or who have, you know, gone to apprenticeship programs at CNN or the *New York Times*. So you know that it's like the internalization of that that affects your writing where you're like, "maybe this editor knows what's best and like, I don't." But as I've grown in my craft and, you know, got an additional like bylines in different arenas, I'm starting to, you know, figure out who I am as a writer and what that identity means. You know? And it's so hard in an industry that like cut-throat and everybody knows each other to, you know, advocate for yourself because like, we have like, seen what happens when like a writer may push too much and they're like, completely alienated and can't find work.
- Hannah (Host): [24:52](#) Yeah. That intense sense of like, again it's like capitalism, but like "you are replaceable, we don't need you specifically. We could bring one of a million other people." Right? Like that that sense of is always there and to hold on to a sense of like, "no, actually I have a unique voice, and a unique perspective, and a skill set, and something to say. And so I do get to push." That's a hard place to get to.
- Taylor: [25:17](#) And you know, I've been like very gracious because it seems that like, Black freelance writers in particular, just kind of enmesh in this community online where it's like, "I'm going to uplift your work, I'm going to support you. Like what do you need from me? This is an editor's email. Like these are their rates," you know, being very transparent because if we're not transparent with each other then like all of these publications can really have power over you and dominion.
- Hannah (Host): [25:44](#) Yeah.
- Taylor: [25:44](#) I am always opening my DMs to other other folks like, in the industry or craft, you know. Help each other out because we don't need to be versus each other, you know? And I think especially for me, one of my best friends, I think, what is her Twitter @? She has a different one on IG, Twitter. It's, is it Zoé Samudzi's (@ztsamudzi)

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- Hannah (Host): [26:02](#) Oh yeah!
- Taylor: [26:08](#) One of my like best friends. I love her to death.
- Hannah (Host): [26:10](#) Really?
- Taylor: [26:11](#) We have matching friendship necklaces. I'm sorry, I'm not wearing it right now, Zoe. I was at work. But you know, I have writing dates with her every Sunday. And she like, holds me accountable and she helps me sharpen my craft and my ideas. And I'm like so honored to have community like that. Or when I was in Philly, it was Lara Witt who is the editor in chief of *Wear Your Voice*. And she really helped me, you know, like strategize. And that was completely over Twitter and the kindness of her heart and both being Black women. So like, I think it's always important to honor those in your community who have really helped you. Because I've seen, you know, so many people, especially like Black gatekeepers in journalism, like not even, you know, respond to your DM. You're like, "I'm up and emerging writer. How is your journey, what's going on?" And then when you experience that, like, why should I even try? You know?
- Hannah (Host): [27:06](#) Yeah. It really struck me what you were saying earlier on about, you know, when you first started trying to do this, like pitching op-eds and be more present on social media, that you were trying to do it totally on your own, without a community and that that was unsustainable. Whereas having that community that amplifies your voice, and that lifts you up, and that offers you tips, and advice, and guidance, turns what is, sort of, on your own, a totally unsustainable prospect into something that can actually keep going over time. I would really love to hear you talk a little bit more about your experience of Twitter in particular because I, I, I think that the conversations that we have about Twitter tend to focus on how it's full of literal Nazis, which it is. Obviously. It's like a really bad platform in a lot of ways, but I also again have, sort of, heard colleagues who are Black women talk about the sort of dismissal of Twitter as exclusively toxic really ignores the way that a lot of communities use it as a, as a lifeline particularly. And this is, you know, a colleague of mine was saying that like she is the only Black woman scholar in her department and so where would she have community if she didn't have Twitter? Like that idea that as a social media platform, it's exclusively toxic, really ignores different functions that it has for different communities. So yeah, I am, I'm curious to hear what [laughs] role Twitter plays for you.

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- Taylor: [28:40](#) Yes. So ask him again. I want to say I love Black Twitter. Black Twitter is, I don't even know how to like, I think it's like an online family reunion. It's like the best way that I can, kind of, categorize it. Cuz I remember when Scandal came out, right? Every single Black person was on Twitter live tweeting. I mean you couldn't escape it. Like, what is it Luvi, Louvi? She, her whole entire career started, I'm so sorry for mispronouncing everyone's name, but her whole life,
- Hannah (Host): [29:13](#) I mean it's just Twitter handles. How are you supposed to know how to pronounce them? It's very hard.
- Taylor: [29:17](#) It's @something.
- Hannah (Host): [29:17](#) Yeah.
- Taylor: [29:17](#) Like a *New York Times* book. But her career started from Scandal recaps and like full circle, her book is being produced by Shonda. So like a complete 360.
- Hannah (Host): [29:29](#) That's beautiful.
- Taylor: [29:31](#) And I like I kind of spoke about when I was a student organizer, like Twitter was life line. You know, like what was the hashtag? It was like students #Mizzou1950 or like #concernedstudent1950. You know, like all of these hashtags we've done. Like the whole entire Black Lives Matter movement is like, a brilliant example of how Twitter operates as like, this lifeline for marginalized communities to get the word out. I mean how did we find out about what was really happening in Ferguson and even today? Like, a lot of that independent journalism is being done from folks with Twitter. You know, like what's really happening. It's not being filtered through like, all of these major networks and conglomerates that has stakeholders, that have political agendas that like donate to folks. Like, it is me and my phone.
- Hannah (Host): [30:22](#) Yeah.
- Taylor: [30:22](#) That is all I have. You know? And I think that's like, very beautiful. But then you know, what are is also censoring voices. I think early in the day it was like, a little bit of like, Twitter really didn't know what they were doing so like, anybody could tweet. And now because it has so much political power it's like, like "hmmm, maybe I should silence sex workers," or like, "maybe I should silence some of these folks." Like, "we're still like, quote unquote 'liberal' in Silicone Valley, but like, let me try

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to silence the like, most marginalized. So when I get up to y'all, it's just become common place practice."

Hannah (Host): [30:56](#)

Yep.

Taylor: [30:56](#)

I don't know if that answered your question.

Hannah (Host): [31:00](#)

Yeah, absolutely did, that it can simultaneously be necessary and a thing that we look at in our life, this could be better,

Taylor: [31:09](#)

But then also, personally I've moved like, I moved to Philadelphia for grad school and I came back to the bay after grad school. And you know like Twitter is how I found a lot of my friends. For instance, Zoe. I was a big fan of her work and then I went to one of her book readings in Philly and like, now I love her like a sister. So like, there like, you know, moments like that, where it's like, we were Twitter friends, then we met in real life and now we're real life friends. But like I'm still going to DM you on Twitter.

Hannah (Host): [31:41](#)

Yeah.

Taylor: [31:41](#)

Or like my friends in Texas, Austin. I'll send them memes all the time and have like, full length conversations. Right now my new Twitter best friend is @WannasWorld who wrote the article about nigger fishing.

Hannah (Host): [31:57](#)

Oh yeah, I've read that. Wow. Yup

Taylor: [31:59](#)

So like, I have been so honored that she has like slid into my DMs and like, we have been, you know--

Hannah (Host): [32:05](#)

Awesome.

Taylor: [32:05](#)

--getting back and forth about our daily lives, but also like how hard it is when like editors don't respond back to us. Or like, especially with her nigger fishing piece, when whole entire platforms take your idea, create content off of it, don't give you credit and someone's getting paid for it. She's like, "BBC News has taken it. *Allure* has taken it," and no one has contacted her. And like the sad thing, which is what I kinda experienced on my *Sabrina* piece, is that so much content is stolen from Black women creatives.

Hannah (Host): [32:41](#)

Yeah.

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- Taylor: [32:41](#) We're not getting any credit where credit is due. So it's like, you know, we're using Twitter to amplify our platforms and we're giving out our ideas, but then that comes at a cost because anybody can just embed a tweet, read your thread, write an article about it, have a podcast, go on the air, and then you're sitting there like reading your work and it's like, what the fuck?
- Hannah (Host): [33:05](#) Yup. I'm trying to remember the actual story that this was, but there was, in the past couple of weeks, a Black woman who wrote a Twitter essay and then a news outlet literally just published the entire Twitter essay, tweet by tweet and was like, "look, we did an article!" And she was like, "you are not allowed to do that." Like I, I know that tweets are public and you can embed one in a article, but like this has gotta be a violation of some sort of like, journalistic ethics, but it just doesn't seem to stop anyone. And what is your, like, what are responses to that? Like what can you do? Is it just like, "well, people are going to steal my stuff and I just have to keep creating," or are there, are there recourses?
- Taylor: [33:55](#) I know for me so, before my *Sabrina* op-ed was published in *Teen Vogue*, I was emailing with my editor and she was like, "oh, did you see how your story got picked up by *Newsweek*?" And I was like, "no, I had no idea." So I went and Googled my name, you know, like, "Taylor Crumpton Newsweek," and I saw that this full time white woman staff writer by the name of Kelly Wynne had taken all of my tweets. She copied and pasted the whole entire thread.
- Hannah (Host): [34:27](#) So this is just standard practice.
- Taylor: [34:29](#) Oh yeah. She barely added any words and then gave me the common courtesy of like, I think the byline with like, "Twitter user talks about the *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* in relation to race or gender." So it was like number one, you've stolen my content. Number two, I'm not only a Twitter user, I'm a journalist. Number three, the irony that I'm writing about how this white woman used her privilege to literally enact violence upon a Black woman, and you were doing the same thing. And I remember I was at work and I had to like take a sweet come to Jesus moment with myself and I was like, "you know what, I'm going to be nice." So I reached out to her. I DM'd her and I was like, "Hey, I am the Twitter user. I'm also a freelance journalist. And like I wanted to talk to you. Why didn't you reach out to me beforehand? Like, I could have been interviewed or like, contributed to your piece." You know, like offering an olive branch. Like, I'm here. I'm not above, I'm a human being.

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- Hannah (Host): [35:33](#) [Laughs].
- Taylor: [35:33](#) Like, we can have a conversation. And I was going to give her like, a couple of hours before I tweeted about it. You know, I was going to like calm down. Like, woo-sa. And then I saw in response that all *Newsweek* did was edit the essay with more other Twitter users's tweets to make it be like, "oh Taylor Crumpton wasn't the only one who brought this up." So in response I was like, "this is the game we're gonna play. This is it. Well, I'm going to tweet about it." So I made a whole entire separate Twitter thread about like, how this woman took advantage of my content and my material. Like, you stole my intellectual property. You know how we are as academics. That's like if someone went and stole my whole entire research presentation before my conference, and did it before me. You know, it's like you did this. And like I am so lucky that a lot of like Twitter users and especially my editors, like, my editors at Teen Vogue even like Phillip and like, the higher ups were tweeting and they're like, "do not read this person's piece." Like, "Read Taylor's. We reached out to her, she contributes to us like read her voice, don't take advantage of her content." And then like, Black women have always continued to show up for me and they were like, "sis, I'm so sorry this has happened to me so many times. Thank you for being vocal. Like, we support you, like we have your back." My phone was like, dying because so many people were just like, "no, we're not gonna stand for this. We're going to retweet your original thread." And even at these two very great, like Black woman creatives. I call them my like, Twitter moms. I love them. So, it's Jenna Wortham of the *New York Times* and Museum Mammy who worked at the Met, like they even tweeted and they were like, "she's not a Twitter user though."
- Hannah (Host): [37:23](#) [Laughs] No kidding.
- Taylor: [37:23](#) Like, like "she's a journalist."
- Hannah (Host): [37:27](#) Yup.
- Taylor: [37:27](#) So that was that one moment where I felt that all of my hard work had paid off because a whole entire online community was trying to hold this like, organization that has existed since 1926 accountable for stealing my content, you know?
- Hannah (Host): [37:45](#) Yeah.

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- Taylor: [37:45](#) So like, what I'm gonna do is I'm going to organize. Like, I'm going to have people, you know, call you out those in power so you know, not to do this again. But the sad thing about journalism is that someone probably will, but at least they know that I'm not gonna stand for it. And yes, like I understand that in this back world of everybody who knows everybody, like I may have burned a bridge or pissed someone off. But like at the end of the day, I am proud of my character and my decision to advocate for myself because historically Black women's material has always been stolen.
- Hannah (Host): [38:20](#) Yeah.
- Taylor: [38:20](#) And they just had to like, you know, accept because of these fucked up system, I'm just going to stay silent and allow this mistreatment to happen. And it's like, it's 2018. Donald Trump's president. I have pink hair. Like, there is nothing cause you use any more.
- Hannah (Host): [38:34](#) It's really like, I think we've proven pretty clearly that being pleasant and nice got nobody anywhere. So fuck that.
- Taylor: [38:43](#) Pretty much.
- Hannah (Host): [38:43](#) Yeah. Yeah. I'm, I'm, so I'm up in Vancouver and we've been going through, in the past couple of years, this sort of like, Me Too Canada version as centered around a number of major literary figures in Canada. And it hasn't made it into the U.S. because Canadian news never makes it into the U.S. But a thing that really characterized this entire moment was the degree to which a small number of powerful people with unlimited access to mainstream platforms got to dominate the narrative, dominate the conversation, can effortlessly get an op-ed in the major national newspaper, can effortlessly get like, *PEN Canada* to come out on their side. And the people who are fighting for, you know, the, I don't know [laughs] just like for the world to be less horrifying. Which is again, as always predominantly women of color, a lot of Indigenous women in Canada, a lot of queer and trans Indigenous folks, primarily have access to social media because that's the platform that you have access to when you are a historically and on an ongoing basis, denied power and denied voice, and so are organizing on social media and expressing themselves on social media. And the degree to which those who want to shut down the conversation have been relying on the language of "Twitter mobbing." It's like I hear this all the time, these like essays coming out written by white men pretending that they're worried saying that you know, "somebody says something wrong on Twitter and they get

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mobbed and it's the death of free speech." And that desire to say "no serious thinking happens on social media" is like such a transparent effort to deal, legitimize a platform where people are actually finding a voice who have been again, historically and deliberately denied access to other kinds of platforms. It's like, it seems so fucking obvious and yet that rhetoric still seems to work.

- Taylor: [40:52](#) It's so [disapproving mms]. I got to figure out a polite way to say this cause I'm a southern woman. But it's like, I always joke that cis het white men are truly from the devil.
- Hannah (Host): [41:03](#) [Laughs] Sorry.
- Taylor: [41:04](#) And you know, right now the universe has not proved me wrong.
- Hannah (Host): [41:08](#) No.
- Taylor: [41:08](#) So universe, if you want to do your thing, you can, but right now my brujas and I are pretty solid. When it's like the moment that a marginalized person access to a platform in which they can be their authentic self, in which they can speak their truth and their lived experiences, that is going to call out how problematic your like, existence in being and how you've done to your community, it's like, "oh my god! The declaration of independence is on fire." Like, the founding fathers are rolling in their graves. And it's like how have you read Phillis Wheatley? Because like she was not the biggest fan of the, like the founding fathers at all. Like marginalized people has always found like a way to talk about their lived experience in the media in which some way has like, pissed y'all off because it's like, "Oh, if I speak about my lived experiences, I'm somehow going to get a white man out of power." You're not going to get out of power, so just fuck up and let me speak about my lived experience. You may learn a finger to, and if you do, be sure to Venmo or Cashapp, because you replace all these policies and law that make me like make next to crap and I have two advanced degrees. So like, pay me for my coin. I always tell creatives on the internet, put your Venmo out there, put your PayPal, put your Cashapp, because people are ingesting just seeing your content and are somehow, you know, being able to like, internalize it and reflect on their problematic stuff. You should be wealthy as freaking Trump.
- Hannah (Host): [42:36](#) Yeah. Like "pay women" is is the moral of the story like and that, oh fuck, what was this? Maybe a couple of years ago somebody created like a, an invoicing that you could send to

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people when they asked you for emotional labor. You just be like, "oh here's my rate. It's \$50 an hour." You are completely right. That the flip side to this, to access to this platform is that it's a free and open platform that has no compensation attached to it. So it's like great, here is a place to get your voice out and also here as a place where tons of people can benefit from the highly skilled emotional and intellectual labor that you're doing and give you nothing in return for it. And that is like on the one hand it's like, "great, amplification of voices," and on the other hand it's like, "great, ongoing exploitation of racialized labor."

- Taylor: [43:31](#) Pretty much. And the ironic fact is like, as I was about to do my thread, I was talking to like, my friend. I was talking to Zoe about it [inaudible] and she was like, "you know, if you do this thread, someone is gonna lift it." Like "just being transparent." You know, I was like, [unsure noise]. I was thinking I don't have that much Twitter clout. Like, I only got maybe like 2000 people or whatever. Actually no, at that time I had like 1600. I was like, "I don't have like a very big platform; nothing's going to happen." And then when it got stolen she was like, "I'm sorry but I also told you." So it's like the thing where I was like, a content or creatives, or like even, you know, as a professor, my professors have Twitter and like, go out and tweet about like, their research and what they do because like at the end of the day, you don't want to have like, these elitism and like, these closed barriers and hid behind pay walls, right?
- Hannah (Host): [44:26](#) Mmhmm.
- Taylor: [44:26](#) It's like shit like this happens where like, something that you put your time, and energy, and your emotion into is just stolen. So it's just the internet.
- Hannah (Host): [44:38](#) [Laughs] Yeah, it's just the internet. Oh, so good and so bad
- Taylor: [44:42](#) At the same time.
- Hannah (Host): [44:44](#) At the same time. Yeah. And maybe like, I'm always so hesitant to ascribe to, to narratives of improvement over time. So it's like, I don't know, everything's getting worse and getting better somehow simultaneously. Not staying the same ever, but somehow getting worse and better at the same time. And I feel that way about the internet a lot of the time too. It's like, great! It's better than ever and also the worst it's ever been. Bless it.

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- Taylor: [45:11](#) I'm like, "wow, I can get essential oils, but also like, what is the environmental costs if I want these two day shipping?" You know, like do I need to go to the store? But then also like, as a marginalized folk, like if I go into the store am I going to be like, looked at or chastised, or are they going to call the cops on me because I'm like, the only Black woman at this essential oil aroma therapy store? So it's like, you know, it's that blessing and that curse.
- Hannah (Host): [45:37](#) Yep.
- Taylor: [45:37](#) I kind of think about, I saw this tweet and it was like, "I think the only people in New York that are happy that the taxicabs are dying are Black people." And someone quote tweeted it and it was like, "stair and rideshares" So it's like, dang!
- Hannah (Host): [45:50](#) Yep.
- Taylor: [45:50](#) Like, technology is improving these things where I can have access to things were like, I didn't want to go to before for fear judgment, but like what's the price?
- Hannah (Host): [45:58](#) [Laughs] It's just reminded me of a, I was at an event at the public library recently that was a sort of staged teach in by a number of trans and queer writers in Vancouver talking back to the library about the fact that the library has platformed a really well known TERF in Vancouver. And it was like, this teach in with the, the administration of the library to be like, "here's why what you're doing is really fucked up." And I was chatting with one of the speakers on my way out and I was like, listen, "worse comes to worst, we just burn the building down." And they were like, "hmm, but what about the carbon footprint?" And I was like, "God damnit, you can't win. Can't even burn things down."
- Taylor: [46:38](#) You never can. It's like, let's burn the flag. And I was like, "does the earth need to take another L?".
- Hannah (Host): [46:43](#) Nope.
- Taylor: [46:43](#) Like I feel that way about fireworks. I love fireworks with, I'm also like, "yeah, do we really have to do this?" Like they have to keep on getting hurt because we all know the earth is a woman. [Music: "Learned From Texas" by Big K.R.I.T.]
- Hannah (Host): [47:10](#) If you'd like to learn more about Taylor, you can read her work at taylorcompton.contently.com or follow her on Twitter

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@TaylorCrumpton. That's T A Y L O R C R U M P T O N. You can find show notes and all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com and this is one of those episodes that has a lot of links. So go and check those out. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. And don't forget to rate and review the podcast. There are delightfully two more new reviews on Apple Podcasts this week. So shout out to Tammy are six to two and Beth tab for their lovely five star reviews. The podcast's theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on [free music archive.org](http://free-music-archive.org) or follow them on Facebook. Taylor's theme song was "Learned From Texas" by Big K.R.I.T. Secret Feminist Agenda is recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh first nations where I'm grateful to live and work. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]