

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
Thursday 24 September 2026



00:00:00.000 --> 00:00:02.000

-Good afternoon

00:00:02.000 --> 00:00:05.348

and welcome, everybody,
to today's event,

00:00:05.372 --> 00:00:06.868

How I Write –

00:00:06.892 --> 00:00:10.000

In Conversation
with Selina Brown.

00:00:10.000 --> 00:00:11.548

Hi, I'm Karen Arthur

00:00:11.572 --> 00:00:15.428

and I am an author,
broadcaster, and artist.

00:00:15.452 --> 00:00:17.908

I founded the
groundbreaking podcast

00:00:17.932 --> 00:00:19.068

Menopause Whilst Black,

00:00:19.092 --> 00:00:22.228

The Joy Retreat Barbados
for Black women in menopause,

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00:00:22.252 --> 00:00:25.000

and I host the radio
show "Can We Talk?"

00:00:25.000 --> 00:00:28.548

My award-winning book,
children's book, Grandmas Locs,

00:00:28.572 --> 00:00:30.908

which celebrates the
diversity of black hair,

00:00:30.932 --> 00:00:32.868

is recently out in paperback.

00:00:32.892 --> 00:00:36.000

And I live contentedly
by the sea.

00:00:36.000 --> 00:00:37.908

For my audio description,

00:00:37.932 --> 00:00:41.000

I'm a Black woman
with a gray locks bob,

00:00:41.000 --> 00:00:42.988

wearing pink framed glasses,

00:00:43.012 --> 00:00:47.228

a turquoise t-shirt, and a
multicoloured wooden beaded necklace.

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00:00:47.252 --> 00:00:48.988

Can I ask you, Selina,

00:00:49.012 --> 00:00:51.643

to do your audio
description, please?

00:00:51.667 --> 00:00:53.468

-Yes, I'm a Black woman

00:00:53.492 --> 00:00:55.948

with big hooped gold earrings,

00:00:55.972 --> 00:00:59.148

a ponytail to the left
hand side of me of my hair,

00:00:59.172 --> 00:01:02.908

and an army like little
jacket and a black top.

00:01:03.529 --> 00:01:04.583

-Love this.

00:01:04.607 --> 00:01:07.128

I'm loving the way you were
grinning when you said that as well.

00:01:07.152 --> 00:01:09.948

Okay, this online
event is free to all,

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00:01:09.972 --> 00:01:12.885

but if you can afford to,
please consider donating

00:01:12.909 --> 00:01:15.628

to the Society of
Authors Access Fund,

00:01:15.652 --> 00:01:17.668

which provides grants to authors

00:01:17.692 --> 00:01:22.268

so that travel, subsistence,
childcare costs and access needs

00:01:22.292 --> 00:01:24.148

aren't barriers to authors

00:01:24.172 --> 00:01:27.428

taking part in events,
residencies and retreats.

00:01:27.452 --> 00:01:29.908

We suggest a minimum donation

00:01:29.932 --> 00:01:31.529

of £5.

00:01:31.529 --> 00:01:34.708

You can help the Society
of Authors Access Fund

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00:01:34.732 --> 00:01:38.668

by making a purchase
on our virtual bookstore

00:01:38.692 --> 00:01:40.268

on Bookshop.org,

00:01:40.292 --> 00:01:43.791

where you can find
books by writers taking part

00:01:43.815 --> 00:01:47.529

in the Society of Authors
Events programme.

00:01:47.529 --> 00:01:51.268

Okay, so this session
will last 45 minutes,

00:01:51.292 --> 00:01:54.308

including the 10 minute Q&A.

00:01:54.332 --> 00:01:55.628

If you have any questions,

00:01:55.652 --> 00:01:58.668

please do post
them in the Q&A box.

00:01:58.692 --> 00:02:01.708

You can post them

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anonymously if you prefer,

00:02:01.732 --> 00:02:05.529

but do post your general
comments in the chat box.

00:02:05.529 --> 00:02:09.748

Also, if you want to turn
on closed captions option,

00:02:09.772 --> 00:02:13.529

you can do that if you
prefer subtitles as well.

00:02:13.529 --> 00:02:16.428

The recording for this
event will be available

00:02:16.452 --> 00:02:18.529

on the Society of
Authors website,

00:02:18.529 --> 00:02:21.628

which can be accessed by
logging into the members area

00:02:21.652 --> 00:02:23.468

and going to our resources page,

00:02:23.492 --> 00:02:25.948

and emailed to
registered attendees

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00:02:25.972 --> 00:02:29.529

shortly after along
with the captions.

00:02:29.529 --> 00:02:33.868

I would now like
to introduce you

00:02:33.892 --> 00:02:35.388

to today's guest,

00:02:35.412 --> 00:02:37.230

Selina Brown.

00:02:37.254 --> 00:02:38.468

Here we go.

00:02:38.492 --> 00:02:40.708

Selina Brown is the founder

00:02:40.732 --> 00:02:44.548

and CEO of the Black
British Book Festival,

00:02:44.572 --> 00:02:46.108

BBBF,

00:02:46.132 --> 00:02:49.508

Europe's largest
celebration of Black literature.

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00:02:49.532 --> 00:02:51.948

The next one takes
place next week,

00:02:51.972 --> 00:02:53.908

Sunday 4 October,

00:02:53.932 --> 00:02:56.529

at the Barbican
Centre in London.

00:02:56.529 --> 00:03:00.228

Founded in 2021
with her own savings

00:03:00.252 --> 00:03:02.108

and no industry backing,

00:03:02.132 --> 00:03:05.588

BBBF has grown
under Selina's leadership

00:03:05.612 --> 00:03:09.548

into a major force in
British literary culture.

00:03:09.572 --> 00:03:11.148

Its work now spans

00:03:11.172 --> 00:03:13.529

a flagship national festival,

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00:03:13.529 --> 00:03:16.108

two Black book
community libraries,

00:03:16.132 --> 00:03:18.988

regional programmes in
Birmingham and Manchester,

00:03:19.012 --> 00:03:21.268

schools and
community initiatives,

00:03:21.292 --> 00:03:24.428

and a landmark
publishing collaboration

00:03:24.452 --> 00:03:26.529

with Pan Macmillan.

00:03:26.529 --> 00:03:28.388

A former librarian,

00:03:28.412 --> 00:03:31.308

Selina has curated
literary programming

00:03:31.332 --> 00:03:32.988

at Glastonbury Festival,

00:03:33.012 --> 00:03:35.228

Cheltenham Literature Festival,

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00:03:35.252 --> 00:03:38.588

Hay Festival, and
Wolverhampton Literature Festival,

00:03:38.612 --> 00:03:41.268

and built partnerships
with global brands,

00:03:41.292 --> 00:03:42.529

including Audible,

00:03:42.529 --> 00:03:44.348

Spotify, Paramount,

00:03:44.372 --> 00:03:46.468

and Penguin Random House.

00:03:46.492 --> 00:03:48.628

In March 2026,

00:03:48.652 --> 00:03:51.529

Selina became the
inaugural recipirent--

00:03:51.529 --> 00:03:53.529

recipient...

00:03:53.529 --> 00:03:54.748

Come on, Karen...

00:03:54.772 --> 00:03:56.988

of the Queen's

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Reading Room Medal

00:03:57.012 --> 00:04:00.188

and was named a National

Reading Hero at Clarence House.

00:04:00.212 --> 00:04:04.748

She has also been named Future Book

Leader of the Year by The Bookseller,

00:04:04.772 --> 00:04:07.788

Trailblazer of the Year

at the London Book Fair

00:04:07.812 --> 00:04:10.529

and a BBC One

Extra Future Figure.

00:04:10.529 --> 00:04:15.828

Selina is also a Penguin

Random House children's author.

00:04:15.852 --> 00:04:17.668

Her debut picture book,

00:04:17.692 --> 00:04:19.028

My Rice is Best,

00:04:19.052 --> 00:04:23.388

became the fastest selling

debut picture book of 2025.

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00:04:23.412 --> 00:04:24.412

Come on!

00:04:24.436 --> 00:04:27.529

And received major
award nominations.

00:04:27.529 --> 00:04:31.178

Across festivals, publishing,
libraries and education,

00:04:31.202 --> 00:04:33.908

Selina is building
cultural infrastructure

00:04:33.932 --> 00:04:37.908

that is reshaping who
gets to participate in

00:04:37.932 --> 00:04:39.348

and influence

00:04:39.372 --> 00:04:41.529

British library life.

00:04:41.529 --> 00:04:44.548

Welcome, SE-LI-NA!

00:04:44.572 --> 00:04:45.885

-Thank you so much, Karen.

00:04:45.909 --> 00:04:47.091

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How are you today?

00:04:47.115 --> 00:04:49.038

-I am good. I am very good.

-Lovely.

00:04:49.062 --> 00:04:51.748

-I am very excited to get this conversation going as well.

00:04:51.772 --> 00:04:54.529

So, where are you geographically?

00:04:54.529 --> 00:04:56.651

Currently, at this present moment,

00:04:56.675 --> 00:04:58.788

I am in Birmingham, where I reside.

00:04:58.812 --> 00:04:59.812

-Ah!

00:04:59.836 --> 00:05:02.388

And is that where you usually write?

00:05:02.412 --> 00:05:04.388

Tell us a little bit about your space.

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00:05:04.412 --> 00:05:05.428

-So, yeah.

00:05:05.452 --> 00:05:07.388

So where am I in
this present moment?

00:05:07.412 --> 00:05:10.068

Yeah, so this is
my... my little office

00:05:10.092 --> 00:05:13.628

slash sound bathroom,

00:05:13.652 --> 00:05:16.588

because I've got like little
sound balls over there.

00:05:16.612 --> 00:05:18.548

You know, a little
couch over there.

00:05:18.572 --> 00:05:20.388

So it's where I write,
wherever I do all my...

00:05:20.412 --> 00:05:22.228

all my brain work.

00:05:22.252 --> 00:05:24.891

You know, all my creative

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work takes place in this little

00:05:24.915 --> 00:05:26.308

space right here,

00:05:26.332 --> 00:05:28.680

away from the home,

somewhere separate,

00:05:28.704 --> 00:05:30.188

somewhere that's mine.

00:05:30.212 --> 00:05:33.529

Yeah, it's a really sacred,

00:05:33.529 --> 00:05:36.298

and slow and

peaceful in this room.

00:05:36.322 --> 00:05:37.428

And I need that sometimes,

00:05:37.452 --> 00:05:39.529

so yeah, my little

space that I've got.

00:05:39.529 --> 00:05:41.228

And so do you have a little...

00:05:41.252 --> 00:05:43.788

Do you have things that you

definitely have around you,

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00:05:43.812 --> 00:05:45.772

that you have to have
around you before you write?

00:05:45.796 --> 00:05:47.286

Or do you have a little routine?

00:05:47.310 --> 00:05:49.529

-Yeah, so I think...

00:05:49.529 --> 00:05:51.948

My routine's really interesting

00:05:51.972 --> 00:05:53.988

because I have three children.

00:05:54.012 --> 00:05:57.308

I have a three year old, a five
year old, and an eight year old.

00:05:57.332 --> 00:05:59.691

So as most mothers, you know,

00:05:59.715 --> 00:06:03.668

my world consists of school
runs and homework and

00:06:03.692 --> 00:06:06.108

wet beds at four
o'clock in the morning,

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00:06:06.132 --> 00:06:07.529

you know? So, um...

00:06:07.529 --> 00:06:10.948

So writing has to fit into my

00:06:10.972 --> 00:06:13.588

beautiful world, I call it.

00:06:13.612 --> 00:06:16.468

And so I find that sometimes

00:06:16.492 --> 00:06:18.668

I come here in the daytime

when they're at school,

00:06:18.692 --> 00:06:22.428

and I'll write in this room

right here that I'm sitting in now.

00:06:22.452 --> 00:06:25.529

Or I'll be in my car, you know, and

sometimes you're just in your car.

00:06:25.529 --> 00:06:26.529

-Hmm.

00:06:26.529 --> 00:06:29.548

And you've got the music on,

and my heat's blowing in my car,

00:06:29.572 --> 00:06:31.708

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and I write in the
notes of my phone

00:06:31.732 --> 00:06:33.588
a lot, as well.

00:06:33.612 --> 00:06:36.588
So I just write in the notes of
my phone and just jot down ideas.

00:06:36.612 --> 00:06:39.228
I sometimes... I love
to go to bodies of water.

00:06:39.252 --> 00:06:41.708
So sometimes I'll bring
a notepad to some water

00:06:41.732 --> 00:06:43.428
and I'll just sit
there and write.

00:06:43.452 --> 00:06:46.988
And so... Or a lot of the time
I wake up at the magic hour,

00:06:47.012 --> 00:06:48.668
which is around four AM.

00:06:48.692 --> 00:06:52.545
And I call it the magic hour because it's
like with the crossing of day and night,

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00:06:52.569 --> 00:06:55.308

you know, when night
ends and the day begins.

00:06:55.332 --> 00:06:57.748

That beautiful... That
beautiful moment there.

00:06:57.772 --> 00:07:01.508

And I'll just sit there and I'll just
really get into a meditative zone

00:07:01.532 --> 00:07:04.308

and I'll write, because
I really believe that,

00:07:04.332 --> 00:07:06.468

you know, writing for me,

00:07:06.492 --> 00:07:09.548

I'm channelling something
from somewhere higher

00:07:09.572 --> 00:07:12.508

and I just need to really
make that space sacred

00:07:12.532 --> 00:07:15.228

in order to do the work
that needs to be done

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00:07:15.252 --> 00:07:18.188

and spread the messages
that need to go out there in this...

00:07:18.212 --> 00:07:19.788

beautiful, beautiful planet.

00:07:19.812 --> 00:07:22.308

And so I see
writing as something

00:07:22.332 --> 00:07:24.668

really, really, magical.

00:07:24.692 --> 00:07:27.148

It's not just me putting
words on the piece of paper.

00:07:27.172 --> 00:07:29.668

For me, there's
something higher that's...

00:07:29.692 --> 00:07:31.268

that it's doing to other people

00:07:31.292 --> 00:07:34.028

when these little seeds are
being planted in their brain,

00:07:34.052 --> 00:07:36.068

when the little smiles
come on their faces,

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00:07:36.092 --> 00:07:38.988

or little memories start
forming in their, you know,

00:07:39.012 --> 00:07:41.668
in their conscious mind. And so

00:07:41.692 --> 00:07:45.908
it's a thing that I take really,
really seriously, you know?

00:07:45.932 --> 00:07:49.428
And I want to give it
the best that I can give it

00:07:49.452 --> 00:07:51.236
every time I write, and so...

00:07:51.261 --> 00:07:52.423
Yeah

00:07:52.447 --> 00:07:53.708
-I think that's beautiful.

00:07:53.732 --> 00:07:55.252
-Thank you.
-I loved listening to that.

00:07:55.276 --> 00:07:57.228
It's interesting
because, of course,

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00:07:57.252 --> 00:07:59.188

some people have to have...

00:07:59.212 --> 00:08:00.868

can only write in their space.

00:08:00.892 --> 00:08:02.788

And you started to
talk about your space.

00:08:02.812 --> 00:08:05.388

But it sounds to me like
you take your space with you.

00:08:05.412 --> 00:08:06.630

-100%

-Do you know what I mean?

00:08:06.654 --> 00:08:08.548

And like some people, also,

00:08:08.572 --> 00:08:10.878

they believe in
the power of writing

00:08:10.902 --> 00:08:12.668

with, you know, handwriting,

00:08:12.692 --> 00:08:15.828

whereas you're writing
wherever it suits you,

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00:08:15.852 --> 00:08:18.748

as long as there's
some kind of quiet

00:08:18.772 --> 00:08:21.711

and you're able to honour,
almost honour your ancestors.

00:08:21.735 --> 00:08:23.988

That's a beautiful,
beautiful image.

00:08:24.012 --> 00:08:25.188

-It is 100%, 100%.

00:08:25.212 --> 00:08:28.988

And when I do write, I
only write in purple as well.

00:08:29.012 --> 00:08:30.905

Everybody knows that
I only write in purple

00:08:30.929 --> 00:08:33.308

because purple is the
colour of the crown chakra.

00:08:33.332 --> 00:08:36.468

And again, really kind of
honouring the sacred word.

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00:08:36.492 --> 00:08:39.231

Like, that's the most
beautiful, most powerful...

00:08:39.255 --> 00:08:41.028

One of the most powerful colours ever.

00:08:41.052 --> 00:08:42.868

I said, well, why wouldn't
I? Why wouldn't I?

00:08:42.892 --> 00:08:44.748

And plus all my notebooks
look beautiful. Like,

00:08:44.772 --> 00:08:47.708

just pure purple, like,
you know, and so I...

00:08:47.732 --> 00:08:49.628

Yeah, so I really
take it seriously.

00:08:49.652 --> 00:08:51.388

I've thought about
absolutely everything.

00:08:51.412 --> 00:08:53.948

You know, when I write
and how I... how I do it.

00:08:53.972 --> 00:08:55.188

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-Beautiful.

00:08:55.212 --> 00:08:57.188

Are you working on
something at the moment?

00:08:57.212 --> 00:08:59.868

So, I'm always
working on something,

00:08:59.892 --> 00:09:01.748

and so I am...

00:09:01.772 --> 00:09:04.628

I had my two-book
deal with Penguin.

00:09:04.652 --> 00:09:06.878

I have... I've actually...

00:09:06.902 --> 00:09:09.529

Last year, I wrote 12 books.

00:09:09.529 --> 00:09:10.529

-Wow.

00:09:10.529 --> 00:09:12.358

-Yeah, I wrote 12 picture books,

00:09:12.382 --> 00:09:14.548

so they're not obviously
novels, of course.

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00:09:14.572 --> 00:09:18.228

And so some of them
have been selected by

00:09:18.252 --> 00:09:20.188

a publisher and hopefully--

00:09:20.212 --> 00:09:22.028

And so I'm in editing stage

00:09:22.052 --> 00:09:24.948

with them books currently,
which is really exciting.

00:09:24.972 --> 00:09:28.468

And then I'm actually trying to...

00:09:28.492 --> 00:09:33.308

I don't know, say about 20% through
an MG book, a middle grade book,

00:09:33.332 --> 00:09:34.948

which is a children's book.

00:09:34.972 --> 00:09:37.548

And that obviously, it's like

00:09:37.572 --> 00:09:40.508

maybe about 12
chapters, like, you know.

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00:09:40.532 --> 00:09:43.988

I think it's about 6,000
words or something like that,

00:09:44.012 --> 00:09:45.388

so it's not that long,

00:09:45.412 --> 00:09:47.788

but it's... Writing
in longer form

00:09:47.812 --> 00:09:51.108

is completely different to
writing picture books. Obviously,

00:09:51.132 --> 00:09:54.588

you're having to do the world building
and the character development, and

00:09:54.612 --> 00:09:56.068

really honouring the story.

00:09:56.092 --> 00:09:58.948

And I really, truly believe
in the story. It's such a...

00:09:58.972 --> 00:10:02.668

beautiful story, and I want to
do it justice as well, and so I...

00:10:02.692 --> 00:10:05.108

My initial plan at the

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start of the year was, like,

00:10:05.132 --> 00:10:07.468

yeah, I'm going to bang it out
by December, man, I'm gonna...

00:10:07.492 --> 00:10:08.588

No, Selina.

00:10:08.612 --> 00:10:10.548

It's... It's September

00:10:10.572 --> 00:10:12.348

when you're still on Chapter 2.

00:10:12.372 --> 00:10:13.409

But that's okay.

00:10:13.434 --> 00:10:14.434

-Yeah.

00:10:14.458 --> 00:10:17.108

Because nothing before it's time,
because nothing before it's time.

00:10:17.132 --> 00:10:20.948

It's allowed me to go with the flow
of how it's meant to come through.

00:10:20.972 --> 00:10:22.228

And when it's here, it's here,

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00:10:22.252 --> 00:10:24.148

in the way it's
meant to be. And so,

00:10:24.172 --> 00:10:26.228

I'm just allowing
it just to form,

00:10:26.252 --> 00:10:29.148

I'm just allowing myself
time to enjoy it as well.

00:10:29.172 --> 00:10:31.411

Because once a book
goes out into the world,

00:10:31.435 --> 00:10:33.771

it's no longer yours.
-Yeah, it takes on a life of its own.

00:10:33.796 --> 00:10:35.676

-It belongs to the planet
and it belongs to the...

00:10:35.701 --> 00:10:39.188

Yeah, it belongs to the people.
So I'm just having this time with it,

00:10:39.212 --> 00:10:42.668

you know, just making sure that
I really kind of give the characters

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00:10:42.692 --> 00:10:44.788

their voice and
the story. The...

00:10:44.812 --> 00:10:47.078

You know, the real
justice it deserves because

00:10:47.102 --> 00:10:50.108

it's a beautiful story, and I know it
can do really well, because I've not

00:10:50.132 --> 00:10:52.188

really read anything
like it similar.

00:10:52.212 --> 00:10:55.668

So, yeah, I'm just holding
it and just really kind of

00:10:55.692 --> 00:10:57.868

making it as special
as possible, man.

00:10:57.892 --> 00:10:59.432

-Oh my goodness
me, I'm excited for it.

00:10:59.456 --> 00:11:01.737

-I'm excited for it as well.
-And you heard it here first.

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00:11:01.761 --> 00:11:03.868

-I don't even know how
I'm excited for it as well.

00:11:03.892 --> 00:11:06.020

I don't know what's going to
be, you know what I mean?

00:11:06.044 --> 00:11:08.244

-I'm sure everybody listening
is excited for it as well.

00:11:08.268 --> 00:11:10.348

Well done. Goodness
me, you know.

00:11:10.372 --> 00:11:12.529

Oh, that's fantastic. What...

00:11:12.529 --> 00:11:13.948

inspires you, then?

00:11:13.972 --> 00:11:15.308

Because you just said,

00:11:15.332 --> 00:11:18.748

because my mind kind of slightly
exploded when you said that...

00:11:18.772 --> 00:11:20.748

I know you say that...

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00:11:20.772 --> 00:11:22.748

You almost said
only, but you didn't,

00:11:22.772 --> 00:11:24.932

but you said they're picture
books. You wrote 12 books.

00:11:24.956 --> 00:11:27.268

You wrote 12 books,
you put 12 books,

00:11:27.292 --> 00:11:30.588

you know, out of your head
onto the page kind of thing.

00:11:30.612 --> 00:11:32.748

What inspires you?
Who inspires you?

00:11:32.772 --> 00:11:34.668

-Um...

00:11:34.692 --> 00:11:36.148

I think

00:11:36.172 --> 00:11:39.228

most of them is inspired
by my granny, bless her.

00:11:39.252 --> 00:11:40.548

And she was one of them people.

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00:11:40.572 --> 00:11:42.028

"No check me
business, no check me",

00:11:42.052 --> 00:11:43.512

you know what I
mean? Like, if she...

00:11:43.536 --> 00:11:47.668

God rest her soul, but if she ever knew I
was chatting her so much in these books,

00:11:47.692 --> 00:11:49.268

oh, I'd be crushed.

00:11:49.292 --> 00:11:51.748

But my granny, oh,
she's inspired so much

00:11:51.772 --> 00:11:53.529

and so my writing,
Best... Again,

00:11:53.529 --> 00:11:56.228

book about rice and peas
inspired by my granny,

00:11:56.252 --> 00:11:58.748

Soup Bowl Hunt, which is
about to come out in March.

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00:11:58.772 --> 00:12:01.628

That's the story, again,

00:12:01.652 --> 00:12:03.028

about Saturday soup

00:12:03.052 --> 00:12:04.708

inspired by my granny.

00:12:04.732 --> 00:12:06.908

So a lot of it's just

taken from, like,

00:12:06.932 --> 00:12:10.708

my childhood. And a

lot of it was just spent

00:12:10.732 --> 00:12:12.308

in my grandma's house.

00:12:12.332 --> 00:12:15.468

One bag a cousins, one

bag a aunties, one bag a this.

00:12:15.492 --> 00:12:16.828

You know what I mean?

00:12:16.852 --> 00:12:19.828

And when I... when I really

look back at it now, like,

00:12:19.852 --> 00:12:21.628

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they were some
special moments, man.

00:12:21.652 --> 00:12:23.529

Yeah, very chaotic.

00:12:23.553 --> 00:12:27.468

But, like, it was just so
warm, so warm. And so I...

00:12:27.492 --> 00:12:29.868

And then I find with
a lot of matriarchs,

00:12:29.892 --> 00:12:31.468

you know, passing away,

00:12:31.492 --> 00:12:34.148

that family structure
isn't as strong any more.

00:12:34.172 --> 00:12:36.668

So I really want my children and

00:12:36.692 --> 00:12:38.108

all children across the planet

00:12:38.132 --> 00:12:40.988

to really feel that energy
of family, of warmth,

00:12:41.012 --> 00:12:42.388

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of friendship, of love

00:12:42.412 --> 00:12:45.228

that I felt. You know?

Because that was special.

00:12:45.252 --> 00:12:47.468

And so that really inspires me.

00:12:47.492 --> 00:12:48.868

I think, um...

00:12:48.892 --> 00:12:51.948

representation, of

course, making sure

00:12:51.972 --> 00:12:53.885

that young...

00:12:53.909 --> 00:12:56.668

young Black children

are seen on the pages.

00:12:56.692 --> 00:12:58.171

Different areas.

00:12:58.195 --> 00:12:59.508

So, you know, um...

00:12:59.532 --> 00:13:00.908

Different households,

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00:13:00.932 --> 00:13:02.428

single parent households.

00:13:02.452 --> 00:13:04.388

Just different formats of family

00:13:04.412 --> 00:13:05.948

are seen on the pages.

00:13:05.972 --> 00:13:10.068

I think, for me, it's about writing
from a place of truth as well.

00:13:10.092 --> 00:13:11.092

So I...

00:13:11.116 --> 00:13:13.748

I've got a World Book
Day book coming out

00:13:13.772 --> 00:13:16.508

in... in March.

00:13:16.532 --> 00:13:18.529

And again, like...

00:13:18.529 --> 00:13:20.028

-What's it called?

00:13:20.052 --> 00:13:21.405

It's called This is My Music.

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00:13:21.429 --> 00:13:23.717

I don't think I'm allowed to
say too much about the story,

00:13:23.741 --> 00:13:25.191

because it's not
out, but there is...

00:13:25.215 --> 00:13:27.428

Like, okay, so let
me talk, this is it.

00:13:27.452 --> 00:13:28.652

-Tell us what you can tell us.

00:13:28.676 --> 00:13:30.788

-So, my... my...

Yeah, My Rice is Best

00:13:30.812 --> 00:13:32.428

is this book here. So I...

00:13:32.452 --> 00:13:35.668

So one of the things
is, like, I really try to

00:13:35.692 --> 00:13:37.908

lead from a place
of truth. So...

00:13:37.932 --> 00:13:42.228

This is... This is one of the

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core things of what happened

00:13:42.252 --> 00:13:43.428

from a place of truth.

00:13:43.452 --> 00:13:45.225

So this book, this
page was done,

00:13:45.249 --> 00:13:47.908

amazing by Maxwell Oginni,

00:13:47.932 --> 00:13:49.529

the illustrator.

00:13:49.529 --> 00:13:52.388

And this is what-- I'll
give you two examples.

00:13:52.412 --> 00:13:55.529

When he first done
this... this page,

00:13:55.529 --> 00:13:57.388

the fridge top was empty.

00:13:57.412 --> 00:13:58.988

And I was, like...

00:13:59.012 --> 00:14:00.529

Nahh!

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00:14:00.529 --> 00:14:01.529

There's no fish--

00:14:01.529 --> 00:14:04.108

-That can't run. That can't run!

00:14:04.132 --> 00:14:06.108

[laughter]

00:14:06.132 --> 00:14:07.828

-[inaudible] can't run.

00:14:07.852 --> 00:14:10.028

So I was like, nah, put
something on top of there.

00:14:10.052 --> 00:14:12.628

And then, so that's
about living from truth.

00:14:12.652 --> 00:14:14.588

You know, when
you've got ginger beer,

00:14:14.612 --> 00:14:17.628

you've got the hard
bread on the table.

00:14:17.652 --> 00:14:20.529

Like, that... that's... You know
what I mean? And then...

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00:14:20.529 --> 00:14:23.908

So, one of the parts
at the end of the story...

00:14:23.932 --> 00:14:26.785

-Which you're going
to read to us later.

00:14:26.809 --> 00:14:28.332

You are going to
read that to us later?

00:14:28.356 --> 00:14:31.756

-Yeah, so a little boy that loves rice and
peas, a little girl that loves jollof rice.

00:14:31.780 --> 00:14:34.028

And at the end,

00:14:34.052 --> 00:14:36.828

his rice unfortunately
drops on the floor,

00:14:36.852 --> 00:14:38.423

and she's like, have
some of my rice,

00:14:38.447 --> 00:14:40.529

try some of my
rice, my jollof rice.

00:14:40.529 --> 00:14:41.529

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And then he chews the...

00:14:41.553 --> 00:14:43.108

He chews...

00:14:43.132 --> 00:14:44.668

He tries the rice

00:14:44.692 --> 00:14:46.588

and he's like, "num, num, num".

00:14:46.612 --> 00:14:50.508

And then Penguin was like, "Yeah,
make him say thank you so much,

00:14:50.532 --> 00:14:51.828

"your rice is great.

00:14:51.852 --> 00:14:53.268

"I like your rice."

00:14:53.292 --> 00:14:54.548

And I was like,

00:14:54.572 --> 00:14:55.908

no, no, no, no, no.

00:14:55.932 --> 00:14:58.788

You're gonna be like,
your advice is nice,

00:14:58.812 --> 00:15:00.268

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but mine's still the best.

00:15:00.292 --> 00:15:01.383

You know what I mean, like?

00:15:01.407 --> 00:15:02.407

So, it's about keeping--

00:15:02.431 --> 00:15:04.191

-Because that's pride,
that's cultural pride.

00:15:04.215 --> 00:15:06.908

-Exactly! It's pride, but it's
also, like, your little cheekiness.

00:15:06.932 --> 00:15:08.588

My little boy's cheeky, man.

00:15:08.612 --> 00:15:09.988

Like, my three
year old is cheeky.

00:15:10.012 --> 00:15:12.148

It's like, you know what
I mean? So it's about

00:15:12.172 --> 00:15:13.948

remaining true to the voice,

00:15:13.972 --> 00:15:16.188

remaining true

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to an authentic...

00:15:16.212 --> 00:15:18.668

And really telling
our stories in...

00:15:18.692 --> 00:15:20.348

in real...

00:15:20.372 --> 00:15:22.628

in beautiful and magical
and amazing ways.

00:15:22.652 --> 00:15:24.508

And so that's what
really inspires me.

00:15:24.532 --> 00:15:25.868

And my children are like...

00:15:25.892 --> 00:15:26.996

I mean, you know...

00:15:27.020 --> 00:15:28.428

Aha, aha...

00:15:28.452 --> 00:15:29.788

Yeah, they're the most...

00:15:29.812 --> 00:15:32.588

It's my children.
Like, I can write...

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00:15:32.612 --> 00:15:36.468

If I had time, I'd be writing-- Banging
out a book a day with them guys.

00:15:36.492 --> 00:15:39.108

And so, yeah, my
children are definitely, um...

00:15:39.132 --> 00:15:41.529

great, great
inspiration as well.

00:15:41.529 --> 00:15:44.068

-And that's why
it's so important.

00:15:44.092 --> 00:15:45.991

And it's almost like we
can tell the difference.

00:15:46.015 --> 00:15:49.588

It's so important that there are
Black authors writing Black characters.

00:15:49.612 --> 00:15:53.468

You know, with the
report last year around...

00:15:53.492 --> 00:15:55.268

You know, I don't
remember the statistics,

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00:15:55.292 --> 00:15:58.028

but certainly around there
are a lot of white authors,

00:15:58.052 --> 00:16:00.068

but creating Black characters.

00:16:00.092 --> 00:16:02.028

And people don't
necessarily know that.

00:16:02.052 --> 00:16:05.268

Whereas it's really important
that more and more authors,

00:16:05.292 --> 00:16:08.628

Black authors, are
represented in the pages

00:16:08.652 --> 00:16:10.308

and children are
represented in the pages,

00:16:10.332 --> 00:16:13.308

and we're writing from our
truth, so I really thank you

00:16:13.332 --> 00:16:15.388

for... for championing that.

00:16:15.412 --> 00:16:18.708

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And I want to come to the
Black British Book Festival.

00:16:18.732 --> 00:16:22.188

I know it's soon and I
know you're in the midst of it,

00:16:22.212 --> 00:16:23.628

but you know what, girl?

00:16:23.652 --> 00:16:26.308

It's gone from strength to strength.
-Thank you.

00:16:26.332 --> 00:16:27.988

Take us back.

00:16:28.012 --> 00:16:30.468

You know, what
led you to found it?

00:16:30.492 --> 00:16:32.068

Why is it so important?

00:16:32.092 --> 00:16:35.548

Yeah, so we'd have
to go all the way back

00:16:35.572 --> 00:16:37.908

to like 2020 when I...

00:16:37.932 --> 00:16:40.308

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So I'm actually a hybrid author.

00:16:40.332 --> 00:16:42.748

And I wear that
with a lot of pride.

00:16:42.772 --> 00:16:46.068

So I'm self-published and I
am traditionally published.

00:16:46.092 --> 00:16:48.188

They both sit side by side.

00:16:48.212 --> 00:16:50.468

I've made my literary agent

00:16:50.492 --> 00:16:51.588

and my publisher aware

00:16:51.612 --> 00:16:53.508

I will never stop
self-publishing.

00:16:53.532 --> 00:16:56.828

Like, I will always hold
that crown with pride,

00:16:56.852 --> 00:16:57.952

you know what I mean? Like,

00:16:57.976 --> 00:17:00.748

both of them are

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absolutely incredible

00:17:00.772 --> 00:17:03.748

ways to market, and, you know,
none's better than the other.

00:17:03.772 --> 00:17:05.428

They can coexist as well.

00:17:05.452 --> 00:17:08.428

And so, back then, I
self-published my book,

00:17:08.452 --> 00:17:09.748

Nena: The Green Juice.

00:17:09.772 --> 00:17:11.052

It did really well.

00:17:11.076 --> 00:17:13.028

But when I went to distribution,

00:17:13.052 --> 00:17:15.148

traditional distribution,

00:17:15.172 --> 00:17:17.308

I got told that the
book wouldn't sell

00:17:17.332 --> 00:17:19.508

because it had a black
girl on the cover, basically.

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00:17:19.532 --> 00:17:20.788

And, um...

00:17:20.812 --> 00:17:22.388

And so what I did then is

00:17:22.412 --> 00:17:24.468

I spoke to other
authors of colour.

00:17:24.492 --> 00:17:26.166

And they were like,
"We're experiencing..."

00:17:26.190 --> 00:17:27.988

"experiencing these
challenges as well."

00:17:28.012 --> 00:17:29.991

So, in direct response to that,

00:17:30.015 --> 00:17:31.750

I set up the Black
British Book Festival

00:17:31.774 --> 00:17:33.988

to really give visibility
to Black British authors,

00:17:34.012 --> 00:17:35.908

new, emerging and established.

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00:17:35.932 --> 00:17:37.748

I started it with my savings.

00:17:37.772 --> 00:17:39.388

It was just a likkle
thing I was trying.

00:17:39.412 --> 00:17:42.188

I'm not gonna... I'm not gonna
sit here, I'm not gonna sit here

00:17:42.212 --> 00:17:44.788

-Good things come from trying things.
-You know what I mean?

00:17:44.812 --> 00:17:46.505

I was, like, let's give it a go.

00:17:46.529 --> 00:17:48.668

And my thing in life is, like,

00:17:48.692 --> 00:17:53.028

just give it a go. I can always come back
and just get a full-time job, whatever,

00:17:53.052 --> 00:17:55.628

but at least I've tried
it. I don't want to...

00:17:55.652 --> 00:17:58.828

When it's time for me to transition

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and go wherever I'm meant to go,

00:17:58.852 --> 00:18:01.058

I don't want no regrets. I
want to just say, you know,

00:18:01.082 --> 00:18:04.628

I lived a full life and I tried every idea
that came into this little brain of mine.

00:18:04.652 --> 00:18:05.828

-100%

-And so

00:18:05.852 --> 00:18:07.588

I tried it and,

00:18:07.612 --> 00:18:10.948

yeah, from the first
year... from the first year,

00:18:10.972 --> 00:18:14.588

we had so many people come out to
the festival that was held in Birmingham.

00:18:14.612 --> 00:18:16.345

One of the things I find,

00:18:16.369 --> 00:18:18.948

especially with
Black organisations,

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00:18:18.972 --> 00:18:20.428

is that we stay grass-roots.

00:18:20.452 --> 00:18:22.108

And that's absolutely okay.

00:18:22.132 --> 00:18:25.868

But I was like, but Black authors
deserve the biggest stages in...

00:18:25.892 --> 00:18:27.868

in the whole of the UK.

00:18:27.892 --> 00:18:30.708

What are the biggest stages?
What are the biggest venues?

00:18:30.732 --> 00:18:31.908

Let's. Go.

00:18:31.932 --> 00:18:33.068

And so...

00:18:33.092 --> 00:18:35.188

And I was literally
like that. I was like,

00:18:35.212 --> 00:18:37.788

we're not going to just
be kind of sidelined.

00:18:37.812 --> 00:18:40.988

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No, we're going to take up space
because we deserve to be seen.

00:18:41.012 --> 00:18:42.668

And so, um...

00:18:42.692 --> 00:18:46.348

Again, that led us
to, 2023 Southbank.

00:18:46.372 --> 00:18:47.868

4,000 people.

00:18:47.892 --> 00:18:50.868

And then since then, we've had a
partnership for the last three years

00:18:50.892 --> 00:18:53.268

with the Barbican Centre,
who were absolutely amazing.

00:18:53.292 --> 00:18:55.468

And we do about 6,000 people

00:18:55.492 --> 00:18:58.211

in one day, and we have,
like, 40 events in one day.

00:18:58.235 --> 00:18:59.788

The next one's on
the 4th of October.

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00:18:59.812 --> 00:19:02.352

Please come down, we
have some some tickets left.

00:19:02.376 --> 00:19:04.508

-Oh, I'm there. I'm
there with my daughter.

00:19:04.532 --> 00:19:05.532

-Amazing.

00:19:05.556 --> 00:19:07.268

-Yeah, it's so much fun.

00:19:07.292 --> 00:19:08.388

It-- Honestly, like,

00:19:08.412 --> 00:19:10.748

I've really... I call
it a playground.

00:19:10.772 --> 00:19:14.788

Like, I want people just to feel that
energy, that buzz and that excitement.

00:19:14.812 --> 00:19:18.468

Oh, somebody's got their
ticket, Jemma. Oh, yay!

00:19:18.492 --> 00:19:21.188

I want you to feel
excitement. I want...

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00:19:21.212 --> 00:19:23.108

People describe it like home.

00:19:23.132 --> 00:19:26.491

You know, it's really a
beautiful, beautiful space.

00:19:26.515 --> 00:19:29.588

Unfortunately, I only watch
it on Instagram stories,

00:19:29.612 --> 00:19:32.852

because obviously I'm in the background
doing all the work, so I don't actually...

00:19:32.876 --> 00:19:35.348

I don't get... oh,
Clare, thank you, yay!

00:19:35.372 --> 00:19:37.108

Thank you for
getting your ticket.

00:19:37.132 --> 00:19:39.091

Oh, okay, another
one, Turner Star.

00:19:39.115 --> 00:19:41.913

Thank you so much! Thank you
guys for coming and supporting,

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00:19:41.937 --> 00:19:43.068

I really appreciate it.

00:19:43.092 --> 00:19:47.308

And so I'm in the background, so I
actually watched the whole festival

00:19:47.332 --> 00:19:48.988

on Instagram stories,

00:19:49.012 --> 00:19:52.748

and I lived through other people's
lived experience of the festival.

00:19:52.772 --> 00:19:55.108

It's, you know, and
there's just so much joy

00:19:55.132 --> 00:19:57.068

that radiates from
people that attend.

00:19:57.092 --> 00:19:58.588

And it's really, um...

00:19:58.612 --> 00:20:00.529

I try my best

00:20:00.529 --> 00:20:02.108

to really honour

00:20:02.132 --> 00:20:05.868

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and give... give a
platform to our voice.

00:20:05.892 --> 00:20:08.529

And so it's for us, by
us. Like, everything...

00:20:08.529 --> 00:20:10.668

Everything that we programme

00:20:10.692 --> 00:20:13.068

is done with purpose, you know.

00:20:13.092 --> 00:20:16.988

And it's something that I know that I would
want to hear and that I would want to see.

00:20:17.012 --> 00:20:19.308

It's all deliberately
been done like that,

00:20:19.332 --> 00:20:21.548

and so it ranges from
children's programming

00:20:21.572 --> 00:20:24.388

to adults programming to
workshops to master classes.

00:20:24.412 --> 00:20:29.388

We've got Spotify there doing... have a
whole living room they're creating there.

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00:20:29.412 --> 00:20:32.868

We have Pan Macmillan there
doing their one-to-one sessions.

00:20:32.892 --> 00:20:35.428

We have Heartless Crew,
we have Corinne Bailey Ray.

00:20:35.452 --> 00:20:39.188

We have workshops, we have...
It's all happening on one day.

00:20:39.212 --> 00:20:42.428

And it really is a
space of joy, honestly.

00:20:42.452 --> 00:20:44.788

And it's deliberately
been created like that.

00:20:44.812 --> 00:20:45.988

And so we do that.

00:20:46.012 --> 00:20:48.788

That's our flagship event
that we do every single year.

00:20:48.812 --> 00:20:52.251

And in addition to that, we do
a festival in Manchester as well.

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00:20:52.275 --> 00:20:54.628

We get about 3,500 people there.

00:20:54.652 --> 00:20:57.188

We do a children's
festival in Birmingham

00:20:57.212 --> 00:20:59.148

that not a lot of people
know about because...

00:20:59.172 --> 00:21:00.748

Oh, well, have you actually?

00:21:00.772 --> 00:21:02.829

We'll talk about you being
there, Karen, next year.

00:21:02.854 --> 00:21:04.112

-Yes, man, yes.

00:21:04.136 --> 00:21:06.593

-Birmingham Children's Festival.

00:21:06.617 --> 00:21:09.988

We have there, and we do
that predominantly with schools.

00:21:10.012 --> 00:21:12.271

So that's why a lot of
people don't hear about it.

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00:21:12.295 --> 00:21:14.948

So it's more of us
working with schools.

00:21:14.972 --> 00:21:17.428

We curate, like you've
mentioned before,

00:21:17.452 --> 00:21:19.588

for a lot of different festivals

00:21:19.612 --> 00:21:21.529

from Glastonbury to
Cheltenham to Hay.

00:21:21.529 --> 00:21:25.588

We have the imprint starting with
Pan Macmillan, which is really exciting.

00:21:25.612 --> 00:21:29.108

That's going to be announced
more at the festival on 4 October.

00:21:29.132 --> 00:21:31.228

We do international
work as well,

00:21:31.252 --> 00:21:33.788

doing some work
with Ethiopia soon.

00:21:33.812 --> 00:21:36.529

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We go into over 100 schools.

00:21:36.529 --> 00:21:38.588

-This is a lot.

00:21:38.612 --> 00:21:40.671

-There's a lot of work.

-There's a lot that goes on.

00:21:40.695 --> 00:21:44.029

-And it's grown again. And so if
anybody's listening, if you have a dream,

00:21:44.053 --> 00:21:46.868

just absolutely go
for it, man. Like...

00:21:46.892 --> 00:21:49.388

Like, there's nothing
wrong with trying.

00:21:49.412 --> 00:21:50.828

Like, it's absolutely...

00:21:50.852 --> 00:21:52.788

You have to try in this life.

00:21:52.812 --> 00:21:54.188

You have to try.

00:21:54.212 --> 00:21:55.948

-Yeah, it's a fantastic legacy,

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00:21:55.972 --> 00:21:57.628

but it's not the only
thing that you do.

00:21:57.652 --> 00:21:59.428

You know, you're
an author, as I said,

00:21:59.452 --> 00:22:00.948

you're the founder and

00:22:00.972 --> 00:22:03.828

powerhouse behind BBBF.

00:22:03.852 --> 00:22:08.988

And recently you smashed the
original 50k fundraising target

00:22:09.012 --> 00:22:12.428

to help save the Maa
Maat Centre in Tottenham.

00:22:12.452 --> 00:22:14.529

Can you tell us a little
bit about this centre

00:22:14.529 --> 00:22:16.529

and its crucial
place in history?

00:22:16.529 --> 00:22:19.988

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-Yeah, so I've known

Elder Pepukayi

00:22:20.012 --> 00:22:23.268

for over 20 years now.

00:22:23.292 --> 00:22:26.318

And he's just, like... He's always
been there in the community.

00:22:26.342 --> 00:22:29.108

Like, you know,
African Liberation Day,

00:22:29.132 --> 00:22:30.978

all these different
community events.

00:22:31.002 --> 00:22:33.468

Always been there showing
up with his books. And then

00:22:33.492 --> 00:22:36.529

we had a conversation and he
told me how he was struggling, and

00:22:36.529 --> 00:22:39.068

I went down to Tottenham
and I was like, wow!

00:22:39.092 --> 00:22:41.748

Like, this is a lot of

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books, you know?

00:22:41.772 --> 00:22:45.628

And his heart's in the right place. And
so when he told me he was struggling

00:22:45.652 --> 00:22:48.028

and about the break-ins
and things like that,

00:22:48.052 --> 00:22:50.148

I was like, I have
to... It's my duty,

00:22:50.172 --> 00:22:52.529

my absolute duty to help you.

00:22:52.553 --> 00:22:56.828

And so, I explained to him,
let's just do a GoFundMe.

00:22:56.852 --> 00:23:00.388

I've never done a GoFundMe
before, let's just do a GoFundMe,

00:23:00.412 --> 00:23:03.508

and let's try and
raise some money.

00:23:03.532 --> 00:23:06.028

And in all, I'm
going to keep it 100.

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00:23:06.052 --> 00:23:07.529

I'm gonna... I have to.

00:23:07.529 --> 00:23:10.529

I thought we'd raise
about £6,000... £6,000.

00:23:10.529 --> 00:23:11.548

-Did you?

00:23:11.572 --> 00:23:14.529

It's something like 80k.

00:23:14.529 --> 00:23:15.529

-I know.

00:23:15.529 --> 00:23:16.908

-It's at 80k.

-I know.

00:23:16.932 --> 00:23:20.068

-I know! I thought we would...

I thought he would raise 6k

00:23:20.092 --> 00:23:21.748

and I thought it would
probably take me

00:23:21.772 --> 00:23:23.748

about 5 months for 6k.

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00:23:23.772 --> 00:23:26.548

I kid you not, I'm not
even lying. I was like,

00:23:26.572 --> 00:23:28.148

oh, let's just try.

00:23:28.172 --> 00:23:30.828

So, when we went viral...

00:23:30.852 --> 00:23:31.948

-Yeah.

00:23:31.972 --> 00:23:34.788

I want nobody
teaching you about what

00:23:34.812 --> 00:23:36.529

being viral feels like.

00:23:36.529 --> 00:23:37.628

-Hmm.

00:23:37.652 --> 00:23:41.529

-Oh my god, what? I was like...

My phone was... duh, duh, duh.

00:23:41.529 --> 00:23:45.172

-Every single group I
was in, it was sharing it.

00:23:45.196 --> 00:23:47.978

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-You know, it was all over
Instagram and rightly so.

00:23:48.002 --> 00:23:49.529

-Literally, literally.

00:23:49.529 --> 00:23:51.268

-Erykah Badu retweeted it.

00:23:51.292 --> 00:23:53.668

I was like, Erykah
Badu's seen me? Ah!

00:23:53.692 --> 00:23:55.508

[laughter]

00:23:55.532 --> 00:23:57.948

I mean, obviously
the money is amazing,

00:23:57.972 --> 00:24:00.599

but that, for me, was like, oh
my god, Erykah. I love Erykah.

00:24:00.623 --> 00:24:03.348

But yeah, so I... We did... I did...

00:24:03.372 --> 00:24:05.508

Not in a million
years did I expect

00:24:05.532 --> 00:24:07.529

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it would do what it did.

00:24:07.529 --> 00:24:08.529

-Yeah.

00:24:08.553 --> 00:24:11.708

And so we're currently working with
Elder Pepukayi and Maa Maat board

00:24:11.732 --> 00:24:14.188

to kind of formulate, because
it happened so quickly,

00:24:14.212 --> 00:24:15.868

to make sure things
are done properly.

00:24:15.892 --> 00:24:17.778

Because we
want it to sit, like...

00:24:17.802 --> 00:24:21.628

With everything I do, there's a level
of excellence that I work at, you know,

00:24:21.652 --> 00:24:24.668

and so we're just making sure...
We're just starting all the T's...

00:24:24.692 --> 00:24:26.458

Crossing all the T's
and dotting all the I's

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00:24:26.482 --> 00:24:29.570

to make sure that everything's
[inaudible], so we'll be announcing

00:24:29.594 --> 00:24:33.588

the developments very soon. But
yeah, he's overjoyed, I'm overjoyed.

00:24:33.612 --> 00:24:35.428

And so, yeah,
it's just incredible.

00:24:35.452 --> 00:24:38.028

Incredible that so many
people came out to, um...

00:24:38.052 --> 00:24:40.108

to support. I, I, like, again,

00:24:40.132 --> 00:24:41.529

I thought it'd be 6k.

00:24:41.529 --> 00:24:44.388

-Yeah, absolutely
brilliant. Fantastic.

00:24:44.412 --> 00:24:47.788

Selina, you're a
Black female author

00:24:47.812 --> 00:24:49.908

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who is also breaking boundaries

00:24:49.932 --> 00:24:51.529

and helping to

00:24:51.529 --> 00:24:52.788

elevate Black books

00:24:52.812 --> 00:24:55.628

in a space that is
traditionally difficult

00:24:55.652 --> 00:24:58.028

for us to feel valued.
Thank you for that.

00:24:58.052 --> 00:25:00.916

Have you encountered
any pushback or barriers?

00:25:00.940 --> 00:25:02.688

-Of course.
-And how have you handled these?

00:25:02.712 --> 00:25:06.529

How have you handled these?
And how do you keep going?

00:25:06.529 --> 00:25:07.708

-You know...

00:25:07.732 --> 00:25:11.388

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-I get so... I've had so
many no's in my lifetime.

00:25:11.412 --> 00:25:14.188

You know, constant no's.

00:25:14.212 --> 00:25:15.668

Honestly, like, this is...

00:25:15.692 --> 00:25:18.028

I think people... I think...

00:25:18.052 --> 00:25:20.468

Social media and just,
you know, in general,

00:25:20.492 --> 00:25:23.529

things that-- Things happen
quickly overnight, like...

00:25:23.529 --> 00:25:25.510

You know, people
haven't seen that

00:25:25.534 --> 00:25:28.788

I have a thousand emails
just to get one yes, you know?

00:25:28.812 --> 00:25:30.708

And I'm... I think that's what's...

00:25:30.732 --> 00:25:33.588

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Because I was also... I
used to live in New York, and

00:25:33.612 --> 00:25:36.388
I've actually trained like
a New Yorker to work.

00:25:36.412 --> 00:25:39.308
So my work ethic is
very, very high, you know.

00:25:39.332 --> 00:25:41.268
And so, um...

00:25:41.292 --> 00:25:44.268
I'm that type of
person that will sit there

00:25:44.292 --> 00:25:46.068
and send a thousand emails.

00:25:46.092 --> 00:25:49.500
That's... that's just
naturally my work ethic.

00:25:49.524 --> 00:25:52.018
Like, people are probably sending
two, I'm sending a thousand.

00:25:52.042 --> 00:25:54.828
And so that's just
naturally who I am

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00:25:54.852 --> 00:25:56.148

at my core.

00:25:56.172 --> 00:25:59.148

And so, no's are natural. Like,

00:25:59.172 --> 00:26:00.708

no's are natural.

00:26:00.732 --> 00:26:02.788

I don't mind. You
know, people, like...

00:26:02.812 --> 00:26:04.708

There's a lot of, like, um...

00:26:04.732 --> 00:26:06.908

Definitely in the beginning,

00:26:06.932 --> 00:26:10.785

the industry is like, who is this black
girl thinking that she can get sponsorship?

00:26:10.809 --> 00:26:12.396

Who's this black
girl thinking that

00:26:12.420 --> 00:26:14.940

black people are going to come
out to this literature? You know?

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00:26:14.964 --> 00:26:16.388

There was a lot of, like,

00:26:16.412 --> 00:26:17.468

"Yeah, right."

00:26:17.492 --> 00:26:20.498

You know what I mean? But it's just
like watch and see, man, watch and see,

00:26:20.522 --> 00:26:23.028

you know what I mean? So,
it's kind of been that, and so

00:26:23.052 --> 00:26:25.508

I've had to, from the
beginning, it's been

00:26:25.532 --> 00:26:30.308

proving... proving that I can
do the work that I claim I can do,

00:26:30.332 --> 00:26:32.465

and my team. I've got a
team of 8 people as well.

00:26:32.489 --> 00:26:34.588

That we can do the
work that we can do.

00:26:34.612 --> 00:26:37.068

And also proving and just

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00:26:37.092 --> 00:26:40.388

smashing down that
stereotype that exists around our

00:26:40.412 --> 00:26:43.168

Black culture and Black
people and literature.

00:26:43.192 --> 00:26:46.272

Like, black people don't read, Black
people don't write, Black people don't...

00:26:46.296 --> 00:26:47.643

Like, constantly.
-It's rubbish.

00:26:47.668 --> 00:26:49.108

-Constantly just kind of

00:26:49.132 --> 00:26:52.108

saying, no, you're wrong,
and this is why, you know.

00:26:52.132 --> 00:26:53.868

No, you're wrong,
and this is why,

00:26:53.892 --> 00:26:56.228

or this is how you can
do... do it differently.

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00:26:56.252 --> 00:26:57.268

And so...

00:26:57.292 --> 00:27:01.358

No is a constant, and, you
know, it's not, like... not, like...

00:27:01.382 --> 00:27:03.108

not all the... not all publishers

00:27:03.132 --> 00:27:06.428

support what we do, not all people in the
industry support what we do, like, it's...

00:27:06.452 --> 00:27:09.108

And that's natural in life,
not everybody's gonna get it,

00:27:09.132 --> 00:27:11.788

but you... you just keep on
walking with the people that do.

00:27:11.812 --> 00:27:13.529

-Exactly.

-And that's it.

00:27:13.529 --> 00:27:16.529

-Yeah, 100%. I mean...

00:27:16.529 --> 00:27:20.988

And what you said was interesting
about the fact that people don't see

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00:27:21.012 --> 00:27:24.748

the behind the scenes and they're
not going to necessarily going to send

00:27:24.772 --> 00:27:25.988

a thousand emails.

00:27:26.012 --> 00:27:28.708

They're not-- Maybe not
even going to send 100 emails.

00:27:28.732 --> 00:27:31.529

And also that when you get a no,

00:27:31.529 --> 00:27:33.071

and that's a when, not an if.

00:27:33.095 --> 00:27:35.668

When you get a no, it
feels like the end of the world

00:27:35.692 --> 00:27:38.188

and it can make you feel like...

00:27:38.212 --> 00:27:40.529

Oh my god, what's
the point kind of thing.

00:27:40.529 --> 00:27:43.948

Someone's asked a question, I know
it's a bit early for questions, but I do...

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00:27:43.972 --> 00:27:46.588

Because it was to do with
something we spoke about earlier

00:27:46.612 --> 00:27:48.529

about the Black
British Book Festival.

00:27:48.529 --> 00:27:50.028

And they want to know,

00:27:50.052 --> 00:27:52.628

how did you find the confidence

00:27:52.652 --> 00:27:55.828

to set up the Black
British Book Festival?

00:27:55.852 --> 00:27:57.908

So it's not necessarily
how you did it.

00:27:57.932 --> 00:27:59.228

It's more about...

00:27:59.252 --> 00:28:00.708

It's about you, isn't it?

00:28:00.732 --> 00:28:01.732

-My confidence?

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00:28:01.756 --> 00:28:02.756

-Yeah.

00:28:02.780 --> 00:28:04.268

-I think... So I...

00:28:04.292 --> 00:28:06.748

So part of it comes
from just my personality.

00:28:06.772 --> 00:28:08.508

Like I'm a very driven person

00:28:08.532 --> 00:28:10.988

that loves books. Like,

00:28:11.012 --> 00:28:13.068

when I say I love books,
I ride for books. Like,

00:28:13.092 --> 00:28:14.628

I was a librarian for 10 years.

00:28:14.652 --> 00:28:16.529

I love books, you know.

00:28:16.529 --> 00:28:19.948

And so, I've got a
real, like, passion for it.

00:28:19.972 --> 00:28:22.068

I wouldn't even call it

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my purpose, because

00:28:22.092 --> 00:28:25.428

it literally feeds me. I love books,
I love being around literature,

00:28:25.452 --> 00:28:26.988

I love being around writers.

00:28:27.012 --> 00:28:28.428

And so there's a real

00:28:28.452 --> 00:28:29.988

great passion there.

00:28:30.012 --> 00:28:32.428

And educationally...

00:28:32.452 --> 00:28:35.228

So I have two
degrees and a Master's,

00:28:35.252 --> 00:28:37.228

and I've studied marketing,

00:28:37.252 --> 00:28:41.226

like, and PR and
event management

00:28:41.250 --> 00:28:43.668

at university and
Master's level.

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00:28:43.692 --> 00:28:45.348

Like I said, I've

00:28:45.372 --> 00:28:48.348

been in New York, and
so I've had industry...

00:28:48.372 --> 00:28:51.908

I've worked for BBC,
I've worked for MTV.

00:28:51.932 --> 00:28:55.748

You know, I have an
industry training around

00:28:55.772 --> 00:28:58.188

the work that I do in
terms of marketing/PR.

00:28:58.212 --> 00:28:59.668

I can design a website,

00:28:59.692 --> 00:29:01.348

I can use Photoshop,

00:29:01.372 --> 00:29:03.748

I can edit photos in Lightroom.

00:29:03.772 --> 00:29:05.428

You know, I can edit audio.

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00:29:05.452 --> 00:29:09.228

I've trained myself in nearly every
skill that I need to build a business.

00:29:09.252 --> 00:29:14.108

And that's, again, it's hours and hours
and hours going to different... I've paid,

00:29:14.132 --> 00:29:16.028

I've invested in my skills,

00:29:16.052 --> 00:29:18.188

and I've done that
deliberately, you know, so

00:29:18.212 --> 00:29:21.428

I understand what needs to be
done and how it needs to be done.

00:29:21.452 --> 00:29:23.188

And I can lead with confidence

00:29:23.212 --> 00:29:24.529

when I'm managing my team.

00:29:24.529 --> 00:29:25.529

-Yeah.

00:29:25.529 --> 00:29:28.188

-And so there's that whole
confidence that comes from, obviously,

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00:29:28.212 --> 00:29:31.508

just my passion for
books and for my people

00:29:31.532 --> 00:29:33.108

and, you know, and the culture.

00:29:33.132 --> 00:29:35.545

And there's that real
confidence in knowing that, like,

00:29:35.569 --> 00:29:38.388

I'll put years into
developing the skills

00:29:38.412 --> 00:29:39.945

that I need to run

00:29:39.969 --> 00:29:42.529

an organization of this level.

00:29:42.529 --> 00:29:44.588

And I've just literally
married the two,

00:29:44.612 --> 00:29:47.068

so I would say pay for

00:29:47.092 --> 00:29:48.828

training courses,

00:29:48.852 --> 00:29:51.548

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like, and, you know,
pay for training courses...

00:29:51.572 --> 00:29:54.548

Even when I was writing
this book, I was paying for...

00:29:54.572 --> 00:29:57.948

I paid for an editor to read
this book before it came out.

00:29:57.972 --> 00:30:01.468

I paid for writing classes
and writing workshops.

00:30:01.492 --> 00:30:03.529

I paid for critique groups.

00:30:03.553 --> 00:30:05.588

This got 20 no's from literary--

00:30:05.612 --> 00:30:07.148

literary agents.

00:30:07.172 --> 00:30:08.588

20 no's.

00:30:08.612 --> 00:30:10.548

You know, and so...

But I knew it was sick,

00:30:10.572 --> 00:30:12.428

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because I'd invested
in it, you know.

00:30:12.452 --> 00:30:14.748

I'd invested in myself
and my skills, and so,

00:30:14.772 --> 00:30:18.308

there's a real confidence that
comes when you actually know

00:30:18.332 --> 00:30:19.828

what you're talking about.

00:30:19.852 --> 00:30:21.948

And I know that I know
what I'm talking about.

00:30:21.972 --> 00:30:23.529

And so, yeah.

00:30:23.529 --> 00:30:26.148

-Yeah, fantastic. Thank
you. And a reminder

00:30:26.172 --> 00:30:28.028

to those listening, if
you have any questions,

00:30:28.052 --> 00:30:30.108

put them into the Q&A box.

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00:30:30.132 --> 00:30:31.529

Um...

00:30:31.529 --> 00:30:33.268

But, you know, I can
keep talking as well.

00:30:33.292 --> 00:30:34.948

That's fine by me.

00:30:34.972 --> 00:30:39.308

You do so much, and I noticed that you
have a background in wellness as well.

00:30:39.332 --> 00:30:40.529

Or maybe I made that up.

00:30:40.529 --> 00:30:41.529

-No, I do.

00:30:41.529 --> 00:30:43.428

-So you do so much,

00:30:43.452 --> 00:30:46.428

but sometimes it's hard to take a
moment to see how far you've come.

00:30:47.529 --> 00:30:49.268

How do you celebrate yourself?

00:30:51.063 --> 00:30:52.529

-Interesting.

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00:30:52.529 --> 00:30:55.948

So I read The 50th Law

00:30:55.972 --> 00:31:00.308

by Robert Greene and 50 Cent,

00:31:00.332 --> 00:31:02.108

and I think in one

of the chapters

00:31:02.132 --> 00:31:04.388

he talks about, like, winning.

00:31:04.412 --> 00:31:07.268

And he basically says, like,

00:31:07.292 --> 00:31:11.268

in the book, that he gives himself

like 24 hours every time he gets a win

00:31:11.292 --> 00:31:12.868

and he's straight back into it

00:31:12.892 --> 00:31:14.788

on riding that same energy.

00:31:14.812 --> 00:31:16.871

And I've literally carried that.

00:31:16.895 --> 00:31:19.529

Like, I don't celebrate

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a lot, to be honest.

00:31:19.529 --> 00:31:22.028

I literally pour that,

00:31:22.052 --> 00:31:25.188

like, that celebrate... I'll
probably be like "ahh!"

00:31:25.212 --> 00:31:27.548

I'll go like that for, like,
maybe, like, a minute,

00:31:27.572 --> 00:31:29.988

and, like, have... and then
smile and journal about it,

00:31:30.012 --> 00:31:32.548

and then I'll dance about
it, and I'll really kind of...

00:31:32.572 --> 00:31:34.228

And then I'll go
straight back in.

00:31:34.252 --> 00:31:36.838

Like, and that's just
literally how I do it.

00:31:36.862 --> 00:31:37.948

Like, I don't...

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00:31:37.972 --> 00:31:39.708

Because when you
pause for too long,

00:31:39.732 --> 00:31:42.068

you lose that energy,
you lose the momentum.

00:31:42.092 --> 00:31:45.508

And I just pour that
gratitude back into the work.

00:31:45.532 --> 00:31:47.588

And that's how I
do it, really. And so,

00:31:47.612 --> 00:31:49.668

you know, I do
obviously take time out to.

00:31:49.692 --> 00:31:52.845

I go on holidays a
lot, I go camping a lot.

00:31:52.869 --> 00:31:54.628

I love sleeping under the stars.

00:31:54.652 --> 00:31:57.529

You know, I do little things
with my kids and stuff, and...

00:31:57.529 --> 00:31:59.708

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But in terms of really
celebrating stuff,

00:31:59.732 --> 00:32:01.529

I really don't do
it, to be honest.

00:32:01.529 --> 00:32:03.788

Because... And you
know what it is as well?

00:32:03.812 --> 00:32:06.308

Like, it all comes
back to purpose.

00:32:06.332 --> 00:32:08.748

Like, does the tree
celebrate being a tree?

00:32:08.772 --> 00:32:11.108

Or does it just continue
to be... be a tree?

00:32:11.132 --> 00:32:14.828

Like, when a mango tree or apple
tree, an apple tree grows an apple,

00:32:14.852 --> 00:32:17.170

does it like, "Oh my
god, I've grown an apple!"

00:32:17.194 --> 00:32:19.504

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No, it just continues
to grow and

00:32:19.529 --> 00:32:22.529

continues to do its stuff.

-I've never heard it put that way.

00:32:22.529 --> 00:32:24.908

-What's it stopping growing for?

00:32:24.932 --> 00:32:26.190

No, no, no.

00:32:26.215 --> 00:32:27.215

You gotta keep on.

00:32:27.239 --> 00:32:30.268

So that's just my... I always
kind of refer back to nature

00:32:30.292 --> 00:32:33.028

when I'm doing my...
with certain things,

00:32:33.052 --> 00:32:35.188

and I just look at how
nature does it. And...

00:32:35.212 --> 00:32:38.948

trees just continue to grow
and continue to produce,

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00:32:38.972 --> 00:32:40.788

continue to create the seeds,

00:32:40.812 --> 00:32:42.529

continue to plant the seeds.

00:32:42.529 --> 00:32:44.348

Keep on growing,

they don't stop.

00:32:44.372 --> 00:32:46.529

No, no, no, no,

no, we don't do that.

00:32:46.529 --> 00:32:48.131

-Interesting. Interesting.

00:32:48.155 --> 00:32:50.468

It's an interesting

response. Thank you for that.

00:32:50.492 --> 00:32:52.388

We have another question.

00:32:52.412 --> 00:32:53.828

Well, it's two questions.

00:32:53.852 --> 00:32:54.948

Cheat.

00:32:54.972 --> 00:32:58.529

What are you

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currently reading? And...

00:32:58.529 --> 00:33:01.428

What do you think the best
book you've ever read is and why?

00:33:01.452 --> 00:33:03.108

-Oh my God, I can't do that...

00:33:03.132 --> 00:33:05.188

-And I know they're
hard questions.

00:33:05.212 --> 00:33:06.823

-I know that's a hard question.

00:33:06.847 --> 00:33:07.908

Try.

00:33:07.932 --> 00:33:10.268

-So... I just... Oh, god.

00:33:10.292 --> 00:33:12.348

So I read...

00:33:12.372 --> 00:33:14.948

So I'm actually taking a
little break from reading

00:33:14.972 --> 00:33:17.028

for a quick moment.

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00:33:17.052 --> 00:33:19.148

Just to rest my brain.

00:33:19.172 --> 00:33:21.959

So I had to read three
books in a weekend.

00:33:21.983 --> 00:33:22.983

-What!?

00:33:23.007 --> 00:33:25.188

-And recently... Yeah, I read
three books in a weekend,

00:33:25.212 --> 00:33:28.348

because I had to do a
piece for BBC Radio 4.

00:33:28.372 --> 00:33:31.188

Obviously, so I had
to fit the reading in.

00:33:31.212 --> 00:33:33.529

And that... It was just amazing.

00:33:33.529 --> 00:33:35.016

It was amazing.

00:33:35.040 --> 00:33:36.640

-I know, that's what
I thought, Michaela.

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00:33:36.664 --> 00:33:39.108

"Three books in a weekend, wow", she says.

00:33:39.132 --> 00:33:41.068

-Yeah, three books in one weekend.

00:33:41.092 --> 00:33:42.548

-How?

-I've never done that before.

00:33:42.572 --> 00:33:44.908

What, did you put your kids in a cupboard? What?

00:33:44.932 --> 00:33:46.578

-No, I was there.

00:33:46.602 --> 00:33:48.525

I don't know how I did it,

00:33:48.549 --> 00:33:50.748

but like I just woke up early in the morning

00:33:50.772 --> 00:33:52.108

and I read throughout the day.

00:33:52.132 --> 00:33:54.423

Every time I paused, I read.

Every time I paused, I read

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00:33:54.448 --> 00:33:55.448

-Wow, amazing.

00:33:55.472 --> 00:33:56.708

-Oh my god, and I was like...

00:33:56.732 --> 00:33:58.492

-And it was just, like,
information overload,

00:33:58.516 --> 00:33:59.972

and there was,
like-- I read 3 books.

00:33:59.996 --> 00:34:01.868

I wrote-- Oh my god,
let me get the titles.

00:34:01.892 --> 00:34:05.438

I wrote-- Read
Derek Owusu's book...

00:34:05.462 --> 00:34:07.228

Let me just get the
titles of the book.

00:34:07.252 --> 00:34:10.588

And the thing about it, there
was one book that I just didn't like.

00:34:10.612 --> 00:34:11.952

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I'm not gonna...

I'm gonna keep it--

00:34:11.976 --> 00:34:15.308

I mean, I was on BBC Radio 4, and I said
I didn't really like that book, you know.

00:34:15.332 --> 00:34:16.588

But I read it to the end,

00:34:16.612 --> 00:34:18.708

and I've never read a
book that I didn't like before.

00:34:18.732 --> 00:34:21.228

And there was
really something...

00:34:21.252 --> 00:34:23.668

I really felt proud of myself

00:34:23.692 --> 00:34:24.868

for getting to the end of it,

00:34:24.892 --> 00:34:27.628

even though I
weren't feeling it at all.

00:34:27.652 --> 00:34:29.608

And I was like, there's
something really powerful

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00:34:29.632 --> 00:34:32.394

about doing something that you
don't want to do, but you do it anyway.

00:34:32.412 --> 00:34:34.828

And so, yeah, I felt really
accomplished for doing that.

00:34:34.852 --> 00:34:37.529

But, so that... so the book...
the three books were...

00:34:37.529 --> 00:34:39.828

Oh my goodness, one second.

00:34:39.852 --> 00:34:41.529

Stay there a second. Oh.

00:34:41.529 --> 00:34:42.988

I'm going to get
the books for you.

00:34:43.012 --> 00:34:45.348

And then... But the
last book that I read...

00:34:45.372 --> 00:34:47.575

I'll get the titles
because me and books,

00:34:47.599 --> 00:34:48.788

sorry, I run a book festival.

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00:34:48.812 --> 00:34:50.262

I have books in my
head all the time.

00:34:50.286 --> 00:34:52.888

Two seconds, I'm going to get
the titles of the books that I read.

00:34:52.913 --> 00:34:53.913

Um...

00:34:53.937 --> 00:34:55.529

Okay, here we go

00:34:55.529 --> 00:34:57.948

So I read...

00:34:59.216 --> 00:35:00.948

The last three books that I read

00:35:00.972 --> 00:35:02.148

were...

00:35:02.172 --> 00:35:04.948

Hunger Pains by Derek Owusu.

00:35:04.972 --> 00:35:06.868

That was a...

00:35:06.892 --> 00:35:10.308

a reading book, a

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short reading book,

00:35:10.332 --> 00:35:12.348

Reading Agency books.

00:35:12.372 --> 00:35:13.868

That was really powerful.

00:35:13.892 --> 00:35:15.588

So it's a really small book.

00:35:15.612 --> 00:35:19.588

I read Loved and

Missed by Susie Boyt.

00:35:19.612 --> 00:35:20.890

Oh my god!

00:35:20.915 --> 00:35:21.915

Really?

00:35:21.972 --> 00:35:23.548

That book was so beautiful.

00:35:23.572 --> 00:35:26.308

It's about a young... a woman

00:35:26.332 --> 00:35:29.108

and her daughter turns

into like a drug addict,

00:35:29.132 --> 00:35:31.108

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and then she has a baby.

00:35:31.132 --> 00:35:33.748

And then she has
to grow the baby up.

00:35:33.772 --> 00:35:35.348

And so she has to

00:35:35.372 --> 00:35:38.628

put-- She kind of puts it
right with her granddaughter,

00:35:38.652 --> 00:35:41.508

because obviously she feels like he
made mistakes with her own daughter,

00:35:41.532 --> 00:35:43.188

who's a drug addict.

00:35:43.212 --> 00:35:44.668

And the story...

00:35:44.692 --> 00:35:46.708

Oh, when I say I was
balling reading that book...

00:35:46.732 --> 00:35:49.588

Oh my god! It was Loved
and Missed by Susie Boyt.

00:35:49.612 --> 00:35:51.628

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What a beautiful,
beautiful story.

00:35:51.652 --> 00:35:54.868

And the one that I didn't--
And I read Euphoria by Lily King.

00:35:54.892 --> 00:35:56.988

And that was the one
I wasn't really feeling.

00:35:57.012 --> 00:35:58.468

You know...

00:35:58.492 --> 00:36:00.988

But we're allowed
to dislike books.

00:36:01.012 --> 00:36:02.868

But the book that I read...

00:36:02.892 --> 00:36:06.188

This is one that I
recommend. It's a debut author.

00:36:06.212 --> 00:36:07.988

I know it's by Harper Collins.

00:36:08.012 --> 00:36:10.468

Let me just get the title
of-- The author's name.

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00:36:10.492 --> 00:36:11.628

Oh, sorry--

00:36:11.652 --> 00:36:13.529

-I hope you're writing
this down, I am.

00:36:13.529 --> 00:36:16.529

Uh...

00:36:16.529 --> 00:36:18.268

Yeah, this book

00:36:18.292 --> 00:36:20.529

had me gripped.

00:36:20.529 --> 00:36:22.668

One second, I'm getting...
I'm getting the author.

00:36:22.692 --> 00:36:24.828

Yeah. Imani Thompson - Honey,

00:36:24.852 --> 00:36:26.529

debut author.

00:36:26.529 --> 00:36:28.529

So it's about...

00:36:28.529 --> 00:36:30.348

-So the book is Honey?

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00:36:30.372 --> 00:36:32.268

-Honey by Imani Thompson.

00:36:32.292 --> 00:36:33.529

-Okay, got it.

00:36:33.529 --> 00:36:34.529

-I could not put it down.

00:36:34.529 --> 00:36:35.548

It's about...

00:36:35.572 --> 00:36:36.572

Oh, god.

00:36:36.596 --> 00:36:38.930

It sounds crazy, telling
you what the story is,

00:36:38.954 --> 00:36:40.588

because you're gonna
look at me sideways,

00:36:40.612 --> 00:36:41.628

but it's just a book.

00:36:41.652 --> 00:36:44.548

It does not reflect my
character in any way.

00:36:44.572 --> 00:36:46.428

-I love the caveat.

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00:36:46.452 --> 00:36:47.919

I'm excited now.

00:36:47.943 --> 00:36:50.948

So it's about a girl that
just goes around killing men.

00:36:50.972 --> 00:36:51.988

Like...

00:36:52.012 --> 00:36:53.228

[laughter]

00:36:55.036 --> 00:36:56.509

[laughter continues]

00:36:56.533 --> 00:36:58.948

Yeah, she just, like,
meets them on dating apps

00:36:58.972 --> 00:37:00.268

and then she murders them.

00:37:00.292 --> 00:37:01.725

-Oh, lord...

-But, like...

00:37:01.749 --> 00:37:05.117

I know, but it's like, you know, but
you kind of understand the reason.

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00:37:05.141 --> 00:37:07.028

Because she's been
hurt so much by men,

00:37:07.052 --> 00:37:09.828

you kind of understand the
reason why she's doing it.

00:37:09.852 --> 00:37:13.108

So you actually sympathise for
her in the end and her character.

00:37:13.132 --> 00:37:14.588

Obviously, the murders are...

00:37:14.612 --> 00:37:17.230

Obviously, I don't obviously
condone murder in any shape or form.

00:37:17.254 --> 00:37:18.254

-Yes, obviously.

00:37:18.278 --> 00:37:20.205

-It's a thriller
and it's non-fict--

00:37:20.229 --> 00:37:22.068

Non-fiction? It's fiction.

00:37:22.092 --> 00:37:23.529

[laughter]

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00:37:23.529 --> 00:37:26.028

-Don't start rumours, babe.

00:37:26.052 --> 00:37:28.491

-It's fiction, but it's a really,
really, really good book.

00:37:28.515 --> 00:37:31.948

Honestly, it's written so
amazing. So I'd recommend, like,

00:37:31.972 --> 00:37:33.668

if it's your kind of thing,

00:37:33.692 --> 00:37:35.868

yeah, it's very... It
says it's addictive.

00:37:35.892 --> 00:37:38.388

Addictive, unpredict--

00:37:38.412 --> 00:37:41.908

Comical-- Comic, sexy,
addictive, and unpredictable.

00:37:41.932 --> 00:37:44.188

Definitely! Incredible book.

00:37:44.212 --> 00:37:45.668

-I'm aware of the time,

00:37:45.692 --> 00:37:48.228

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and I've realized that we... I
do want you to read your book,

00:37:48.252 --> 00:37:50.529
but I've just got
one more question.

00:37:50.529 --> 00:37:52.628
Well, I don't know
whether it was a question.

00:37:52.652 --> 00:37:54.668
It says... This
might be a scoop.

00:37:54.692 --> 00:37:57.988
There's been talk
of the BBBF Awards.

00:37:58.012 --> 00:37:59.529
[Selina laughs]

00:37:59.529 --> 00:38:00.529
What's your view?

00:38:00.529 --> 00:38:03.628
I might have put the cat
among the pigeons, I don't know.

00:38:03.652 --> 00:38:06.108
-Who...? Where's that
information come from?

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00:38:06.132 --> 00:38:08.228

Somebody DM'd me the other day

00:38:08.252 --> 00:38:09.908

pitching the idea to me.

00:38:09.932 --> 00:38:11.982

-Pam asked that question and it's not
anonymous now.

00:38:12.006 --> 00:38:13.268

Sorry, I've outed you.

00:38:13.292 --> 00:38:15.468

-Yeah, somebody
pitched the idea to me,

00:38:15.492 --> 00:38:19.028

but there's already an
amazing black awards,

00:38:19.052 --> 00:38:21.228

literature award that
takes place already.

00:38:21.252 --> 00:38:23.529

-What, The Diverse Awards?

00:38:23.529 --> 00:38:25.428

-No, not that one.

-Okay, okay.

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00:38:25.452 --> 00:38:28.028

-There's another one
that takes place by Marcia.

00:38:28.052 --> 00:38:30.588

She's from Birmingham. She's
a publisher from Birmingham.

00:38:30.612 --> 00:38:31.868

And so I just feel...

00:38:31.892 --> 00:38:34.468

I just feel like that
lane is already taken

00:38:34.492 --> 00:38:37.148

and I'm really,
I'm really, um...

00:38:37.172 --> 00:38:39.028

conscious that we do a lot.

00:38:39.052 --> 00:38:41.548

And we don't have to be
doing everything, you know.

00:38:41.572 --> 00:38:44.468

And so we have to make space
for other people to do the work

00:38:44.492 --> 00:38:46.108

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that they're also doing as well.

00:38:46.132 --> 00:38:48.628

And so, and she
does an amazing job.

00:38:48.652 --> 00:38:51.308

It already exists already, we
don't need to be in that space.

00:38:51.332 --> 00:38:53.468

So I don't see us ever
doing that, to be honest.

00:38:53.492 --> 00:38:55.529

-So we've nixed that, guys.

00:38:55.529 --> 00:38:56.628

Uh...

00:38:56.652 --> 00:38:58.548

Selina, I'd love you
to do a short reading.

00:38:58.572 --> 00:39:00.228

I'm aware that, um...

00:39:00.252 --> 00:39:01.948

Adults don't have--

00:39:01.972 --> 00:39:04.388

I love reading

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my book to adults.

00:39:04.412 --> 00:39:07.068

So I'm quite excited for you

00:39:07.092 --> 00:39:09.529

to read from your book
for us. So I'd love you to--

00:39:09.529 --> 00:39:10.529

-No worries.

00:39:10.529 --> 00:39:12.668

-From your book My Rice is Best.

00:39:12.692 --> 00:39:14.529

-So I just think we start
from the beginning.

00:39:14.529 --> 00:39:17.148

So yeah, so My Rice is Best,

00:39:17.172 --> 00:39:19.228

written by myself, Selina Brown,

00:39:19.252 --> 00:39:20.988

and illustrated by the amazing

00:39:21.012 --> 00:39:22.529

Maxwell Oginni.

00:39:22.529 --> 00:39:24.529

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And there's Maxwell there.

00:39:24.529 --> 00:39:26.108

Yay.

00:39:26.132 --> 00:39:27.851

Yeah. So...

00:39:27.875 --> 00:39:29.529

"Dinner time,

00:39:29.529 --> 00:39:32.588

Shane", shouted Mum.

00:39:33.529 --> 00:39:36.529

Shane's eyes lit up.

00:39:36.529 --> 00:39:39.908

His nose twitched

and his mouth watered

00:39:39.932 --> 00:39:44.529

as he smelt the sweet

scent of his favourite meal.

00:39:44.529 --> 00:39:47.108

He sped to the kitchen table

00:39:47.132 --> 00:39:49.268

and plonked

himself in his chair.

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:39:49.292 --> 00:39:53.028

There it was. The
best... food... ever.

00:39:53.052 --> 00:39:57.529

A delicious bowl
of rice and peas.

00:39:57.529 --> 00:40:00.068

"These are the most super-duper,

00:40:00.092 --> 00:40:02.788

"extra tasty, mega delicious,

00:40:02.812 --> 00:40:06.508

"ultra yummy-licious
rice and peas ever",

00:40:06.532 --> 00:40:08.988

said Shane, shoving
a big spoonful

00:40:09.012 --> 00:40:10.529

in his mouth.

00:40:10.529 --> 00:40:14.908

The rice and peas made
Shane feel powerful and mighty,

00:40:14.932 --> 00:40:18.268

as though he was the
strongest kid on his street.

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:40:18.292 --> 00:40:20.108

No... his country.

00:40:20.132 --> 00:40:23.108

No, the whole wide world.

00:40:24.529 --> 00:40:26.529

Shane asked,

00:40:26.529 --> 00:40:29.348

"Mum, why is this so yummy?"

00:40:29.372 --> 00:40:30.708

"It's a secret",

00:40:30.732 --> 00:40:31.988

Mum whispered.

00:40:32.012 --> 00:40:33.548

"Really?" said Shane,

00:40:33.572 --> 00:40:35.529

"tell me, please!"

00:40:35.529 --> 00:40:36.708

"Okay,

00:40:36.732 --> 00:40:38.268

"the secret is these.

00:40:38.292 --> 00:40:41.148

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"They're called pimento seeds", said Mum,

00:40:41.172 --> 00:40:44.529
shaking them in her hand
before showing them to Shane.

00:40:44.529 --> 00:40:47.228
Shane looked down
at those brown seeds.

00:40:47.252 --> 00:40:50.548
They looked too
small to be so special.

00:40:50.572 --> 00:40:55.028
"This secret has been in our family
for many generations", said Mum.

00:40:55.052 --> 00:40:58.148
"Great-grandmother passed it
to Granny when she was a girl.

00:40:58.172 --> 00:40:59.866
"Then Granny passed it to me.

00:40:59.890 --> 00:41:02.148
"And now I'm
sharing it with you."

00:41:02.172 --> 00:41:04.148
"Wow!"

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:41:04.172 --> 00:41:05.668

Shane was amazed.

00:41:05.692 --> 00:41:07.308

"Would you like
some special rice

00:41:07.332 --> 00:41:09.948

"for your school lunch
tomorrow?" asked Mum.

00:41:09.972 --> 00:41:12.268

"Yesss", said Shane.

00:41:14.529 --> 00:41:16.188

At lunchtime the next day,

00:41:16.212 --> 00:41:18.148

Shane opened his lunch box.

00:41:18.172 --> 00:41:19.748

And there it was,

00:41:19.772 --> 00:41:23.529

the best rice in the world.

00:41:23.529 --> 00:41:25.588

Sitting next to him was Yinka.

00:41:25.612 --> 00:41:27.108

She had her own tub.

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:41:27.132 --> 00:41:29.868

"What's in there?" asked Shane.

00:41:29.892 --> 00:41:32.388

"This is the most super-duper,

00:41:32.412 --> 00:41:34.948

"extra tasty, mega delicious,

00:41:34.972 --> 00:41:36.828

"Ultra-yummy-licious

00:41:36.852 --> 00:41:37.988

"food ever.

00:41:38.012 --> 00:41:40.529

"The best rice in the world,

00:41:40.529 --> 00:41:42.529

"Jollof rice."

00:41:42.529 --> 00:41:44.108

So I'm going to
leave it right there.

00:41:44.132 --> 00:41:45.796

-Thank you so much.

00:41:45.820 --> 00:41:48.008

-You can obviously get the
book if you want to read it.

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:41:48.032 --> 00:41:50.508

-I was just looking at the
chat box and realising that

00:41:50.532 --> 00:41:52.529

everybody is coming

00:41:52.553 --> 00:41:54.948

to BBB Fest on

00:41:54.972 --> 00:41:57.468

on the Sunday 4 October.

00:41:57.492 --> 00:41:58.668

-Yay! Oh, that's amazing.

00:41:58.692 --> 00:42:01.908

-I would like to say
a huge thank you

00:42:01.932 --> 00:42:04.828

to Selina for joining
me for today's event,

00:42:04.852 --> 00:42:07.748

and thank you to all
of you who joined us.

00:42:07.772 --> 00:42:10.548

Thank you to Sophia A. Jackson

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown

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00:42:10.572 --> 00:42:12.529

for moderating today's event.

00:42:12.529 --> 00:42:14.988

Do come and say hello
to the Society of Authors

00:42:15.012 --> 00:42:17.828

who will be at the Black
British Book Festival

00:42:17.852 --> 00:42:19.708

on 4 October

00:42:19.732 --> 00:42:22.388

with a stand, and are
hosting a workshop

00:42:22.412 --> 00:42:24.948

"How to Make Money
from Your Writing:

00:42:24.972 --> 00:42:27.529

"Industry Insights with
the Society of Authors."

00:42:27.529 --> 00:42:30.508

The Society of Authors
next online event

00:42:30.532 --> 00:42:32.548

takes place tomorrow morning

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:42:32.572 --> 00:42:34.388

with a Feel Good Friday –

00:42:34.412 --> 00:42:39.051

Building resilience: Navigating
rejection and knock-backs.

00:42:39.075 --> 00:42:40.188

Well, there you go.

00:42:40.212 --> 00:42:41.628

For more, head to

00:42:41.652 --> 00:42:45.268

SocietyofAuthors.org/events

00:42:45.292 --> 00:42:48.529

to book or check out
our events programme.

00:42:48.529 --> 00:42:53.428

This #SoAatHome event

00:42:53.452 --> 00:42:54.508

is free for all,

00:42:54.532 --> 00:42:57.268

but if you can afford to,
please consider donating

00:42:57.292 --> 00:42:59.668

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
Thursday 24 September 2026



to our Society of
Authors Access Fund,

00:42:59.692 --> 00:43:02.028

where we suggest
a minimum donation

00:43:02.052 --> 00:43:03.529

of £5.

00:43:03.529 --> 00:43:05.748

And as we said before,

00:43:05.772 --> 00:43:08.308

you can also help the
Society of Authors Access Fund

00:43:08.332 --> 00:43:11.828

by making a purchase
on our virtual bookstore

00:43:11.852 --> 00:43:13.508

on Bookshop.org,

00:43:13.532 --> 00:43:15.908

where you can find
books by writers taking part

00:43:15.932 --> 00:43:18.748

in the Society of Authors
Events programme,

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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00:43:18.772 --> 00:43:20.388

including my book,

00:43:20.412 --> 00:43:21.548

Grandma's Locs,

00:43:21.572 --> 00:43:22.988

and Selina's book,

00:43:23.012 --> 00:43:25.228

My Rice is Best.

00:43:25.252 --> 00:43:27.548

Another big, huge thank you

00:43:27.572 --> 00:43:30.543

to Selina for taking
time out of your busy day.

00:43:30.568 --> 00:43:32.056

-Honestly... No,
it's been a pleasure.

00:43:32.080 --> 00:43:34.068

-And all of you who
joined us for today's event.

00:43:34.092 --> 00:43:37.148

And let's continue this
conversation on social media

00:43:37.172 --> 00:43:38.748

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
Thursday 24 September 2026



with the festival hashtag,

00:43:38.772 --> 00:43:41.529

#SoAatHome.

00:43:41.529 --> 00:43:43.538

I just want to say
thank you, Karen.

00:43:43.563 --> 00:43:45.228

You've been an amazing host.

00:43:45.252 --> 00:43:47.308

It's been absolutely incredible.

00:43:47.332 --> 00:43:48.332

Thank you so much.

00:43:48.356 --> 00:43:50.996

Like, honestly, your energy, I
can just feel it through the screen.

00:43:51.020 --> 00:43:53.388

Thank you to everybody
that's tuned in today.

00:43:53.412 --> 00:43:55.348

I appreciate you taking time out

00:43:55.372 --> 00:43:56.711

to listen to me talk.

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown

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00:43:56.735 --> 00:43:58.428

It's been absolutely incredible.

00:43:58.452 --> 00:44:00.611

If there's any
questions, just DM me

00:44:00.635 --> 00:44:01.788

@TheSelinaBrown.

00:44:01.812 --> 00:44:03.391

I don't mind helping people out

00:44:03.415 --> 00:44:05.748

because people helped me
when I was on my journey,

00:44:05.772 --> 00:44:08.428

so always feel free
to jump in my DMs.

00:44:08.452 --> 00:44:10.788

Sophia, you're incredible.

00:44:10.812 --> 00:44:13.868

Thank you for all the work that
you do in the Society of Authors.

00:44:13.892 --> 00:44:15.868

You champion us so much

00:44:15.892 --> 00:44:17.948

How I write – in conversation with Selina Brown
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and I really, really
appreciate every work,

00:44:17.972 --> 00:44:19.028
everything you do.

00:44:19.052 --> 00:44:20.798
And I see you.
Thank you so much.

00:44:20.822 --> 00:44:22.588
And again, it's been a pleasure!

00:44:22.612 --> 00:44:23.868
Thank you so much!

00:44:23.892 --> 00:44:25.028
Yay, we did it!

00:44:25.052 --> 00:44:26.529
Thank you, guys.

00:44:26.529 --> 00:44:28.729
-Oh, dear me...