

**In Proximity**  
**Episode 15: Kalia King and Tara Duncan**  
**Final Transcript**

[Music/Old Radio Sounds by Ken Nana]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** You're listening to P-R-O-X.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

**Kalia King:** I also think that it's important to note there are so many people in our industry, but we are a very small group, especially of Black women who are doing creative who are on the exec side. And the relationships and the overlap, I always say, "Don't sleep. We all talk to each other."

**Tara Duncan:** We really do.

**Kalia King:** And if we don't, there's always a way to get connected very easily.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes.

**Kalia King:** Like, the six degrees of separation are nonexistent.

**Tara Duncan:** I have to say, it's one of the things that I am so grateful for in being in the business right now is that very real sisterhood and camaraderie that exists amongst all of us.

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** If you haven't yet listened to our last episode, please pause here and check it out. Then come back. It features Pete Nicks, Proximity's head of nonfiction and the director of Anthem, our new documentary now streaming on Hulu, with composer Kris Bowers, who stars in the film.

Proximity Media produced Anthem with Onyx Collective, a premium content brand under Disney Entertainment. So for this episode, our head of television Kalia King sat down with Tara Duncan, president of Onyx Collective, to learn about her work and career.

At Onyx, Tara's slate of premium programming includes the legal drama REASONABLE DOUBT, THE 1619 PROJECT docuseries, and their debut title SUMMER OF SOUL, winner of the Academy Award for best documentary feature in 2022.

Previously, Tara was president at Freeform, Disney's young adult television network. And she'll talk a bit about this on the podcast, but she was recruited by Disney Entertainment co-chairman Dana Walden and then-chairman Peter Rice while working as a producer with a deal at Hulu, collaborating with the likes of Craig Erwich, president of Disney Television Group. Before all this,

Tara served executive roles at Netflix and AMC, and got her start at Section Eight, George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh's production company.

Tara and Kalia go way back. So today, they talk about how they met – at a job interview then party, finding their community of Black women creatives in Hollywood, programming TV for audiences, and what it's like to NOT have imposter syndrome.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

**Kalia King:** I am Kalia King. I'm executive vice president of television at Proximity Media, which the shorthand just means that I run television. I am so excited for our conversation today because we are talking with kind of our fearless leader, too, if I'm being honest, the one and only Tara Duncan. If you would, please introduce yourself for our listeners.

**Tara Duncan:** Hi. I am Tara Duncan, and I'm the president of Onyx Collective.

**Kalia King:** Obviously, the first thing we have to do for all of our listeners is define what the Onyx Collective is. So, please, talk to us about your wonderful studio.

**Tara Duncan:** Onyx Collective is the newest content brand for Disney Entertainment. We are focused on amplifying and empowering artists of color with the idea that we will produce content from underrepresented points of view. And we're a hybrid kind of studio and platform in that we do have talent deals, we can produce our own content, but our primary destination is for Hulu. We are focused on making Hulu Originals.

**Kalia King:** One of the unique things about your position is that, as you mentioned, you make talent deals. And the way that we get to work with each other, the way that you lead our charge just as much as Mr. Ryan Coogler does, is that we have one of those talent deals with you, which just means that all of our television series are produced exclusively for the Disney brand, but even more specifically for the Onyx Collective, for Hulu, which makes it very exciting because it just means we get to work together all the time.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes. And our first title together, the documentary Anthem, directed by the incomparable Pete Nicks, just launched on Hulu.

**Kalia King:** What was the origin story of Onyx, and what was your vision for creating the studio?

**Tara Duncan:** The origin story is kind of a fortuitous one. I had joined the company in 2020, and I had a deal—a producing deal at Hulu. And not long after I closed my producing deal, Dana Walden took over oversight of Hulu. And we met, and she knew that I had been an executive and a producer, and she also knew that, you know, programming for Black audiences, finding stories from underrepresented points of view is very important to me. And through just that initial conversation, months later, an opportunity came up to run Freeform, and she called me to see if I was interested in that. And I was very, very, very excited about Freeform, which is Disney's young adult or new adult content brand.

And even when we were having that conversation, I did mention, you know, well, I think it's really important that there is someone within the Disney ecosystem that's focused on audiences of color. And lo and behold, a few months later, there had already been conversation, and the

building blocks of what became Onyx were already in place. It was already ongoing. And I was simply invited into that dialogue.

And my joke around it is you break it, you buy it because I had a lot of thoughts and a lot of ideas. And that just kind of evolved into one day I found myself on a walk with Bob Iger, you know, talking about what this new content brand might look like. And from there it kind of became Onyx Collective. You know, there were several iterations, and we had to build a strategy. There was a, you know, a few things that happened before we actually even had a name, but that was kind of how it happened.

**Kalia King:** So one of the reasons I'm so excited to talk to you is because we've known each other a very long time.

**Tara Duncan:** We have.

**Kalia King:** But this is the first time we've actually gotten to really, like, day-to-day work with one another.

**Tara Duncan:** It's true.

**Kalia King:** So I would love for us to tell our meet cute story, which may defer. So I'm going to let you start.

**Tara Duncan:** Well, do I—do I start, or do you start?

**Kalia King:** I think you start.

[LAUGHTER]

Because there's two—what's so funny is when I was thinking of when we met, my first answer was incorrect. And then I went back, and I was like, oh, crap, that's right. We met before that.

**Tara Duncan:** Well, which—now I'm like, oh, gosh, well, which one is the first one?

**Kalia King:** I met with you. We had lunch or coffee when, at the time, Ada Chiaghana was leaving your desk when you back at—back when you were at Fabrik.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes.

**Kalia King:** And I was coming to meet with you to replace her as your assistant.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes. No, I remember.

**Kalia King:** And if I remember correctly, I didn't get the job because you said I was maybe too qualified.

**Tara Duncan:** Yeah. You were very mature, knew what you were doing, already on a path, and, you know, we were a very—we were a small production company. And I was like, "She's going to be bored." But yes, no, that—that is—

**Kalia King:** Okay, that was—was the story? Well, the first story I said was, "Oh, you know, it's so funny," and I instead went back to the last time that I saw you and maybe the first time that I had actually had more of a close interaction with you since we met that time, which was at somebody's birthday party in, like, Larchmont?

**Tara Duncan:** Yes, but it's kind of also a very funny thing about our business. Everything is so relationship-driven.

**Kalia King:** Absolutely.

**Tara Duncan:** And, obviously, we had met, and, like, I knew at the time you were already on a path and on your way to doing great things. But then there just comes a point where you're just, like, friends. And then, you know, so many times, people are like, "How did you meet?" And you're like, I don't even remember. It just feels like we've kind of known each other forever.

**Kalia King:** Forever. And I also think that it's important to note there are so many people in our industry, but we are a very small group, especially of Black women who are doing creative who are on the exec side. And the relationships and the overlap, I always say, "Don't sleep. We all talk to each other."

**Tara Duncan:** We really do.

**Kalia King:** And if we don't, there's always a way to get connected very easily.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes.

**Kalia King:** Like, the six degrees of separation are nonexistent.

**Tara Duncan:** I have to say, it's one of the things that I am so grateful for in being in the business right now is that very real sisterhood and camaraderie that exists amongst all of us.

**Kalia King:** I agree.

**Tara Duncan:** Like you said, we all are kind of connected in some way. And even if we're not, like, each other's day-to-day running buddy, we know someone who is. And there is a sense that I'm going to protect everyone in this circle first, and it's very real, and I definitely rely on it on a day-to-day basis. And, you know, it feels special.

**Kalia King:** It does. And it feels really good when you're on calls or in meetings. I always know when I'm on calls with you, with Ashley Holland, who's your SVP, senior vice president, at Onyx. There's always an additional layer for me in those meetings where I'm thinking, first and foremost, protect them. So anytime we're having conversations, I'm always very aware that there is sort of an extra sisterhood that's involved in this.

And I think that one of the most, I'd say, pivotal or poignant moments even in my career was that night that the three of us had dinner right when I came on board at Proximity. We had just sort of crystallized everything. We knew that Ashley was coming. And we all sat down and then it was like, oh, we get to just make stuff with our friends now.

**Tara Duncan:** We're having fun.

**Kalia King:** And we get to all kind of come through this business together and sit at varying parts of this table but have really meaningful spots at the table. As someone who's been in and around the business for a really long time, can you just talk a little bit about what it's been like for you as a Black woman to grow in this business from the perch that you sit at now versus where you were even when you first got started?

**Tara Duncan:** I love the focus and the framing of the question because I do think I can divide my career. I joke that, you know, there was my life before Layne and after Layne, Layne Eskridge. I've always wanted to work in film and TV. I grew up in a family where we went to the drive-in every weekend.

**Kalia King:** We loved the drive-in in the family.

**Tara Duncan:** Loved the drive-in. It was a big deal when we started going to the walk-ins. That's how much we went to the drive-in. But so I feel like, for me, I've kind of been on this path my entire life, as boring as that sounds. But I will be honest, I think in those early days of my career, I was regularly the only one in rooms. And I didn't have the vocabulary to even articulate what that experience really felt like. And it wasn't in the zeitgeist either in the way that it is now. But I definitely had feelings of being isolated and feeling lonely. And there were many instances where you're kind of like, did I just hear that? Did they just say what I thought they said?

And it wasn't until I was at Netflix—and by this point I was already an executive. I was a senior creative executive at Netflix by the time I had the experience of working in an environment like that with another Black executive. I mean, I should say I did work at BET briefly before, which was also really a definitive time for me in my career. But being at Netflix with another Black exec who, you know, when something is said, you kind of perk up, and there's someone's eyes who meet your eyes, and they're like, “Oh, yeah. I heard that too, girl,” it just made such a difference.

**Kalia King:** It does.

**Tara Duncan:** And also that there was somebody who was reading material and evaluating material and thinking about the audience in the same way that I was, it just—it really changed the game for me, and it really kind of solidified, like, this is the type of experience I want to have at work.

[KN 9 to 5 by Ludwig Göransson]

**Kalia King:** So I want to specifically know about the time period, actually, when we saw each other at that birthday party. You were leaving Netflix, you were going to travel, you were really excited to just sort of, like, be Tara.

**Tara Duncan:** Walk the earth.

[LAUGHTER]

**Kalia King:** I think it was more that. And then you came back, and you took a producing deal. I first want to know; what made you take a producing deal? Also identifying for people what a producing deal is and how it all works, and then how very quickly into that deal, you went back to an even bigger exec job.

**Tara Duncan:** Well, I took a year and some change off and just traveled.

**Kalia King:** That's really nice.

**Tara Duncan:** It was fantastic.

**Kalia King:** So you come back, and you're like, "Okay."

**Tara Duncan:** I come back.

**Kalia King:** "My creative juices, I want to get going."

**Tara Duncan:** I'm broke. And so I'm like, okay, I have to get a job. I am not an independently wealthy person. And the truth is, I did not want to be an executive. I really wanted to spend some more time building my own slate. And just, I love the relationship that you have as a producer with a writer, and really kind of being in the ground level, building an idea. That collaboration is just really special. And I wanted to just spend some time doing that and also really experience getting a show off the ground from a producer's standpoint and being on set. That was really what I was focused on at the time.

And I knew the guys at Hulu. I've worked with the majority of the executives there in various stages of my career, so I felt very comfortable with them. Craig Erwich, who oversees Hulu and Disney Plus now was someone very early in my career when I was a manager, a new manager, who invited me out to lunch. And it was my first time having lunch with a very senior executive at the Warner Brothers dining room with the white tablecloths, and it's very important. But he's always just been someone that was very supportive of me.

And so I felt comfortable in that group taking a leap as a producer. And they were very understanding of me not wanting to join the executive ranks. And it was going well, and then, you know, Dana Walden entered my life. And she—in our first meeting, which was just very easy in, like, a *Girlfriends* Kiki. I was, like, so ready to have to pitch myself and my slate, and, you know, it was very easy. But I remember she asked me what my five-year plan was, and, you know, I'm coming off of, like, traveling for a year. I was probably wearing, like, a flowy dress and, you know, just—and I'm like, "Oh, you know, I don't really do that. You know, I just want to produce a couple shows, you know."

**Kalia King:** "Just want to be happy."

[LAUGHTER]

**Tara Duncan:** I just remember the look on her face, and I knew that was when she was like, "I'm going to give this girl a job." And that's what she did.

**Kalia King:** And the decision to do that, though, to leave this space that you were trying to create for yourself, this new chapter in creating content, the opportunity to be on set, all these things that you were sort of lining up, to take, as you said earlier, a corporate job, what was the sort of thought process as you were deciding to take that job? And was it just a job you couldn't refuse?

**Tara Duncan:** It was. It was a few things. It was—I wanted to be at Disney because, in most of the places that I've worked, I've been at places during times of transition, and I've worked for really amazing bosses but people who were in some way or another making it up as they went along. There was, like, a really good learning and strength and being able to move from your instincts and build something new. But I also wanted to work with executives who had just been doing it forever, just had—

**Kalia King:** Just, like, a masterclass in—

**Tara Duncan:** Absolutely, and that is what the executive team at Disney offered. I wanted to see what that looked like. And I had a meeting with Dana, but also Peter Rice. At the time, Peter was the chairman of Disney General Entertainment. And they are just so formidable and impressive and just have receipts when you just look at the companies they've built and worked for. And when you look at the shows that they've developed and the movies they've made, you're like, well, you know, these people know something, and if I've got some things I can learn from them.

So there was that. But then also the offer at the time was for Freeform, and I loved the brand. I just thought it was such a good time to focus on storytelling from the perspective of new adults at a time when—this was in 2020. And I was so moved and inspired by the young people who were making sure they were being heard and the way in which they were approaching coming of age and what their goals and aspirations and what adulthood—you know, how that was being defined and what that looks like, I think was something slightly different than even what I aspired for myself because the world has just sort of changed so much. And that was just really exciting to me.

**Kalia King:** Such a hard brand in my opinion. I've always thought the Freeforms, ABC Family, like those teen brands because they are so much of the zeitgeist but because they also have such a fleeting sort of attention span—

**Tara Duncan:** Absolutely.

**Kalia King:**—and the ways in which they consume content has also changed dramatically.

**Tara Duncan:** Dramatically.

**Kalia King:** I have a 17-year-old, and I'm always very curious as to what he's watching or what he's interested in. And it's funny, some of the shows that are about him and his peers, they don't watch. And the things that hit, he's like—he loved that Selena Gomez unscripted show that was on, I think HBO Max for a while.

**Tara Duncan:** Selena + Chef?

**Kalia King:** Yes. The cook show.

**Tara Duncan:** That was a good show.

**Kalia King:** And then randomly he was like—he loved Wednesday. The things that hit for their group is so different. And so I imagine programming for Freeform was also probably a very open and free form to produce in, but also a really challenging one and one that you were trying to find—hit a nail on the head that was maybe moving a little bit.

**Tara Duncan:** Well, you're kind of like—you're talking about two things that are, yes, as an executive, you have to consider, which is, one, you talked about just the attention span and the fact that young people today are consuming content on their phones, and they're watching other actual people do videos of themselves on YouTube. They're not necessarily only looking for scripted or even reality TV. You know, and if they are, they're definitely not looking for it, you know, in a sort of programmed—

**Kalia King:** Produced way, yeah.

**Tara Duncan:**—produced environment, you know? So there's that aspect of it, but then there's just the storytelling, creative piece of it. And I have to say, I actually don't think, whereas, you know, the clothes are different, the vernacular is slightly different, I do think coming of age is still somewhat universal and that the challenges, the highs, the lows, the stakes of it are all kind of the same. But it is—you know, it's always a dance in what we do to try to find the thing that is going to, you know, be lightning in a bottle and kind of create a spark for as big an audience as possible. And that's—you know, that's always a challenge, but it's fun to play in that sandbox. And so that's really the thing that kind of got me back to being an exec.

**Kalia King:** I love that you said how many execs are making it up as they go along or sort of learning on the job. Do you feel any sort of imposter syndrome? Do you feel any sort of space where you're like, "I feel challenged, but those same things that challenge me on a day-to-day or not knowing the answer or those kinds of things also make me say like, do I belong here or should I be here?" And how do you combat that?

**Tara Duncan:** That's a good question. No.

**Kalia King:** That's great. I love—I want that. I want to know that.

**Tara Duncan:** Here's the thing. I started this job during quarantine, and so it was a moment where I think everyone collectively was trying to figure out: what do we do now? What comes next? And no one knew any more than the next person. And I will say, being at Netflix, but also just being a curious person, I am really comfortable with, I don't know. And while taking a president's title and having to lead a team in a way that I had never done before was very scary, there was something about that moment in time. And also, I have to say, I mean, I worked with a really amazing group of people at Freeform because they all just showed up for me. And so I think because I was really okay to be like, "Okay, so now what do we do?" Everything kind of worked out.

And the truth is, even though I am the leader, and I ultimately have to make the decision, I am not a business affairs executive. I am not in charge of marketing. I am not an expert at finance. You have a team of people who really all know what they're doing. And really part of the job is just bringing all these great minds together to kind of create the right dialogue and, you know, a conversation that leads to the decision. But it's not like it's all on me.

And because of the team that I worked with at Freeform, I realized that very early on. And so I hope by me being really vulnerable with them, they were vulnerable with me, and, you know, we kind of—we figured it out. But I do think, again, like, because we were—the world was also changing under our feet—

**Kalia King:** And trying to figure it out itself.



**Tara Duncan:**—like, nobody—nobody knew anything. And, you know, I don't know that we've gotten to the other side of that. We're still there.

[LAUGHTER]

**Kalia King:** I'm really glad you say that, though, because I think it's important. If people ask the question of, "What do you think is, like, the most important thing you need to, like, make it in this business?" I always say vulnerability and the ability to say, I don't know, or the ability to have awareness about what you know and what you don't know.

[Good Times by Ludwig Göransson]

**Kalia King:** I think another really important thing that listeners probably want to know about is getting inside the process of shows getting made. So the difference of what you decide to put on your slate in the first place for just development, just to kind of see if there was an idea that can pan out into something to write the script, that process, but the bigger decision of things that actually get green lit and end up on air. I would say the business of television is probably the aspect that people forget the most.

If all shows were made just because of their creative, we would have a very different lineup of things that are on air. People don't know about the calendars and the slots and the things that you're moving around that, "This should air then," "Oh, no, that's not going to be ready. It's got to move to spring," like, the business side of what you decide to put on air with your teams and how that process looks for you. What goes into the decision making of greenlighting a show?

**Tara Duncan:** We make TV for an audience. We want people to watch it and consume it. And I think, you know, as somebody who is creative and really enjoys the creative process and creators, it's like, yes, I love when we can do something that feels provocative and unique and different, and we can move culture, but that requires people consume it. And so we have a strategy, and we have a very—we have some ideas around who we're actually programming for, like who are we talking to, who are we trying to bring in? And then there are—you know, there are certain things that we just know from TV having been made all these years, like kind what works.

And so that becomes our filter for what we're looking for. And we are regularly having this conversation: what are you looking for? What do you need? And so, and you know, but it is—it's a dance because while I can tell you the mandate, I can say, we want action, we want these types of characters, we want to appeal to women, we blah, blah, blah, blah. I can tell you all of that stuff. I also want you to take all of that and surprise me and bring me the thing that I—

**Kalia King:** That I didn't even know I was looking for.

**Tara Duncan:**—I didn't even know this is what it was. So it's—it is very much a back and forth. But one thing I do love about you because you've also been an executive, and Ryan is the same way, you guys really do want to know. You understand, like, we are here to bring an audience in. And so you want to know who is that audience?

I start there because I do think sometimes some writers are—sometimes there is this conception that it's just all the creative, but it's the creative combined with the business needs. So we start with, you know, the business needs, and then it really is we want to be in business with people

who are just really talented and have a fresh voice and feel like something that is going to be somewhat familiar and that it's a story that we love and characters we want to invest in, but, you know, pieced together in a way or from a perspective that feels like, "Wow, I haven't seen that before," or, "I'm inspired and moved by that." So, you know, there's no real formula. It's a trial-and-error process that, you know, we are engaged in...

**Kalia King:** (whispers) Together.

**Tara Duncan:** Together.

**Kalia King:** I would love to know any projects that you've worked on, whether at Disney or Netflix or even Fabrik in the past that you really felt like they hit the Tara spot. They were a project that was just really important to you, you felt like it was going to be great for the audience, and all those things kind of came together, and it went out, and it did the thing that you wanted it to do.

**Tara Duncan:** Yeah, I mean, I have a few of those. I will say, I think the show that's just made the biggest impact on my career but also personally, is just Orange is the New Black. And I joined—it was the end of season two, and I was in earnest on the show season three. And so I was not, like, in the early phase. I wasn't there for season one, but I had not worked on a show before with Black women and characters who were my age. And that was also just so different to not only their storylines, the voice of it, but also the talent in the show. You know, I connected with them, and just the fact that it was a show about women that you didn't typically see driving story of all different shapes and sizes and backgrounds. And it was funny, but it was dramatic. It had something to say, but it was also, at the same time, really silly.

But that—it really—there was nothing like it. And I still have not seen anything like it, but it was such a huge hit. It was massive. It really drove the international business for Netflix at the time. And kind of in the same way that I talked about, like, Layne, you know, changing the way that I wanted to show up as an exec, I mean, Orange also informed the types of stories I wanted to be a part of. And even with us behind the scenes, also, it really informed the type of people that I want to give a platform to, you know, in front of the camera. So really proud of that.

[In Proximity Idea 2 Stinger by Ludwig Göransson]

**Tara Duncan:** You know, you've been asking about the job and also defining what it is to be an executive. I'm so curious because you have also been an executive, and you're now a producer. What has that transition been like for you?

**Kalia King:** It's been very freeing.

[LAUGHTER]

It's been very freeing. I have a life now.

**Tara Duncan:** Why?

**Kalia King:** Because one, volume.

**Tara Duncan:** Yeah.

**Kalia King:** It changes drastically. When you are an executive at a corporate company, there's a lot of different things you are balancing. You are balancing being an executive at a corporate company, but you're also balancing the creative. And I think you're also still trying to hang on to those producer/writer type relationships. You're a producer who is working for a larger conglomerate or a larger company, and because of that you have more money, which means you can buy more things, which means you can have more projects.

And so it's nothing to have your slate be 30, 40. There's nothing to have like seven things in production at one time while you're also still trying to develop the other 20 things on your slate. And it makes for a very hard existence when you're trying to also take care of yourself and have some sort of personal awareness or, I don't know, get married, like meet people, have a life.

**Tara Duncan:** Oh, that.

**Kalia King:** There was once a time that we were on a call, and I remember the call just kept going. And I think you texted that you were, like, supposed to be on a date or something.

[LAUGHTER]

**Tara Duncan:** I remember. I was like, "Guys, I got to go."

**Kalia King:** And I was like, "This is why our lives are"—

**Tara Duncan:** "I have a date. Leave me alone. I'm hanging up."

**Kalia King:** I think I texted Ryan. I was like, "We got to let her go," because the truth is it is—the boundaries of your job, especially when you're on the corporate side, it's really up to you to create the boundaries because, otherwise, there won't be any. And so the biggest difference now is that, one, I'm in charge of the things I'm doing, and so I'm allowed to decide how much or how little I want to do.

It's really important to create a team so that I can delegate and give things away, and I don't have to do everything. But it—sheer volume. I'm working on a quarter of the things I was working on when I was at the network. And so it really allows me time to be—the easy thing is being present in my life. But it also allows me to be really present in the material I'm working on. I get time and space to sit in a meeting or on a Zoom with a writer for two or three hours and talk about ideas or to figure out how to break the third act or to figure out, like, to take the notes that we're given from our studio and say, "Okay, wait, what's the way that we actually want to sort of pull this apart but still keep the beauty and the foundation of what you've been trying to create since the beginning?"

I really love my job as a producer. I think I always knew that this was what I wanted to do. I always say that along the way, I've had moments where the glass slipper fit perfectly, and I knew that I was exactly where I needed to be at that time. And I knew the second I started in this job that this was the chapter that I'm in right now. And I'm really enjoying the freedom of both creative, the creative work I'm doing, as well as the freedom I have in my life to do other things.

**Tara Duncan:** Are there things, though, that you learned or realized or understand having been an exec that have made you the producer that you are?

**Kalia King:** I think because I understand how to buy, I understand what the executives are going to want to hear and what they're probably going to ask, I feel like I have the cheat codes in a lot of ways. I also think that because I've sat in a room and moved things around and said, "Oh, that's not going to be ready in time, so we got to do this"—I also think that I've been lucky enough to be on the buying side at what I still think is the best place, telling stories.

**Tara Duncan:** For the audience, like just when you say move things around, what do you mean by that?

**Kalia King:** Moving things around on the schedule.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes.

**Kalia King:** Moving things around in terms of what's going to air and what time it's going to air.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes.

**Kalia King:** Even if you're a streamer, you still have to figure out when something's going to drop. It's a puzzle. If we have this big heavy genre show, I need to have something else that is the opposite of it. I understand all of that. And so when I'm even looking at my own little producing slate, I'm looking at it as a puzzle. I have too many things that are going to be shot in Africa. Like, I got to—I got to go. I got to find something for Ohio.

[Prox Recs Theme by Ken Nana with Caution to the Wind by Ludwig Göransson]

**Kalia King:** We always like to do something called Prox Recs, and it is any sort of recommendation you have for listeners, whether it's a book, a podcast, a quote you live by. Anything that gives you inspiration, anything that helps you sort of lead and guide and move through your career, we love to share those things to help inspire others.

**Tara Duncan:** My recommendation is just anything Toni Morrison. I personally really love her nonfiction. I'm so inspired by her because she was both an editor and a writer. And I liken myself to being someone who's similar in that, yes, I'm an executive, I understand the process and the business, but I also really understand and am very connected to the creative. And so the way in which she was just able to make that transition while also being a single mother, I just find endless amounts of inspiration in her.

But also she has a—it's an essay, but I think it's also available as a book. It's called *Playing in the Dark*, and it's just looking at race and culture as a construct in our—I think she describes it as our literary imagination, and really just kind of examining point of view and how sometimes racism and the way in which we think about Blackness and whiteness does also seep into our imagination. And so, even when we think we are unshackled and truly creating from, you know, an unbridled space, there sometimes are symbols and messages that are kind of embedded in there. And I think about that a lot sometimes, but she's just, to me—like, I highly recommend anything by her.

**Kalia King:** It.

**Tara Duncan:** Yes.

**Kalia King:** That's fantastic. Okay. I'm going to have to look mine up because there was a day that I was on my Instagram, and I somehow suddenly figured out how to shift my algorithm. I found the page where you put all the words in and the things that you want and the things you don't want. And now my timeline is just bubblegum and rainbows. Like, it's a really incredible experience to be on my Instagram at the moment because it was really bringing me down in a big way before.

So one day, this woman named Felecia Hatcher popped up, and it was a random video, and in it, she said, "Who are you uninterrupted?" And she asked the question, and she then went into a bit of an explanation. When I tell you that I was so stumped for days, enough that I kept going back and watching the video, I kept going back and listening to the prompts.

But then, when you really ask yourself who you would be uninterrupted, who are you without any hurdles, anything in the way, how do you answer that question? And I realized for someone who considers themself very self-aware, I have no idea. And one of the bigger transitions that I went through in life was into motherhood and going from being Kalia to being Dom's wife, to being Remy and Sincere's mom. Like, that transition was wild. And the reason it was so wild was because I didn't know who I was anymore, that there is a little bit of a sense of self that dies when the single independent chapter ends and the chapter begins that is a new level of selflessness that you don't know. And so right now, one of the things I'm really, really intentional about is discovering who Kalia is in this particular chapter—

**Tara Duncan:** I love that.

**Kalia King:**—and finding people like Felecia Hatcher who ask the questions of, "Who are you uninterrupted?" But then, also, doing myself the service of sitting down with my notebook and my journal and actually starting to do the work of being able to, hopefully by this time next year, answer who I am uninterrupted is something that I am pushing upon everybody. And that is probably the most important goal of my life right now, not making an excellent TV show. It's about being the best Kalia I can be and the most authentic version of that. And so I recommend Felecia Hatcher, but I also recommend answering the question: who are you uninterrupted?

**Tara Duncan:** I love that. That's so great. That's beautiful.

[Juno Arp Stinger by Ken Nana]

**Kalia King:** This has been one of my favorite conversations.

**Tara Duncan:** You're lying.

**Kalia King:** I actually could have sat here and talked for hours. I have many, many questions and many things I want to talk about.

**Tara Duncan:** This was way—I was really nervous, but I didn't get to ask you all the questions I wanted to ask you.

**Kalia King:** That means we'll just have to have a drink.

**Tara Duncan:** We'll just have to have—yeah, totally.

**Kalia King:** Unfortunately, we can't record that for everyone.

**Tara Duncan:** No.

**Kalia King:** But it has been such a pleasure sitting together and, honestly, bigger than this, it's a pleasure working together. I say that very, very honestly.

**Tara Duncan:** Aw, thank you for saying that. It's truly an honor to be had. This is so nice, and I'm glad that we were able to kind of share our working relationship, and this was really fun.

**Kalia King:** I want to, like, cue up the Girlfriends theme music.

**Tara Duncan:** I know!

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media. If you like the show, be sure to follow, rate, and review it on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast app, and tell your friends and loved ones to do the same. Go on. Send a link to someone who you think might really like this conversation, and stream Anthem on Hulu now.

Learn more and read transcripts of this episode and others at [ProximityMedia.com](https://ProximityMedia.com). Don't forget to follow [@ProximityMedia](https://www.instagram.com/ProximityMedia) on Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.

The show is produced by me, Paola Mardo. Executive Producers are Ryan Coogler, Zinzi Coogler, Sev Ohanian, and me. Our theme song and additional music is composed by Ludwig Göransson. Ken Nana is our Sound Designer and Mix Engineer. Audio editing for this episode is by Cameron Kell with production assistance from Courtney Archerd.

By now, you've probably seen our incredible show art in your podcast apps, on social media, and on our website. It's all by our social media coordinator and designer Alexandria Santana.

Special thanks to the whole Proximity Media team and to you for listening to In Proximity. We'll be back in a couple weeks or so, so be sure to catch up on any episodes you may have missed, and we'll see you then! Stay tuned.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

[MUSIC STOPS]

**Kalia King:** I feel like we're just running a list of people who I interviewed and, like, made it to the final round of their assistant job and didn't get it.

[LAUGHTER]

**Tara Duncan:** See, and I knew none of these people until I came to Disney. This is part of—I realize I am at this stage in my career and I have not worked with any of the most important executives.

**Kalia King:** The most important—that's because you're the most important executive.

**Tara Duncan:** Well no, they are. And I was like, I got to know these people.

**Kalia King:** You're like, I need to be introduced to them while I'm also taking their president job.

**Tara Duncan:** And then I just—I made a list, and I just crossed all the names. I'm like, okay, great. Check.