

## 08 Anna&Brien

**Claire Clotley:** Welcome to the American Dreamers Podcast. I'm Claire Clotley and every week together with Aurra Studios, we share insightful conversations with black Brits, black Americans and their families to explore whether life is better for black people in the United Kingdom or the United States of America.

So far, I've spoken to black Brits and black Americans on a one-to-one basis, focusing on their individual and direct experience. This episode is a little bit different. I'm delighted to be speaking with Brian Teasley, a black American from St. Louis and Anna Finch, a white Brits from Barth. They are an interracial couple who not only live together, but also work together running a product design firm in New Orleans, Louisiana. Welcome both of you. How you doing?

**Anna Finch:** Hello?

**Brien Teasley:** Doing fantastic. How are you?

**Claire Clotley:** Yeah, really well. Um, I've survived my first Thanksgiving in Las Vegas. I've got loads of food in the fridge. I don't have to cook for weeks. I'm doing great.

**Brien Teasley:** Great. Our Thanksgiving, you know, it's always weird when it's 75 degrees outside.

**Claire Clotley:** We don't celebrate Thanksgiving in the UK, Anna. Are there loads of different like traditions that you've now been experienced in since living in the US?

**Anna Finch:** The thing that always gets to me in Thanksgiving, though, we always talk about is how can you do this at the end of November? And then four weeks later, be prepared to do it all again with your family.

And when everybody jokes kind of half joking about all this is so stressful trying to get everybody together. Yeah. Well, why do you keep doing it? But I guess Christmas just isn't as big of a thing, in my opinion, over in the, in the states, as it is for the UK.

**Brien Teasley:** I think we're exhausted by the time Christmas rolls around.

So yeah, I'd say it's pretty big though. So.

**Claire Clotney:** The food is pretty big, but they're missing a key ingredient. Bestow gravy. Why don't they have bestow

**Anna Finch:** It's last for me. But then again, I feel like I would want to keep my supplies to myself. There's only a few places that I've found that have it. And so that's, that's just very special occasions and very close friends.

**Claire Clotney:** Have you found, yet, Yorkshire pudding?

**Anna Finch:** Oh, well, yes. My Yorkshire puddings. Well, those are made from scratch. Of course. Oh, yeah.

**Claire Clotney:** Oh, you doing the damn thing? I love that.

**Anna Finch:** Watching it blow up in your oven, positive way. Not in a bad way.

**Claire Clotney:** It was always all Bessie to be. I can't say I've ever made Yorkshire puddings from scratch. Maybe you can share the recipe.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah,

**Brien Teasley:** They're fantastic. She makes a darn good Yorkshire pudding.

**Claire Clotney:** Tell me a little bit about how you both met.

**Brien Teasley:** Oh, we met in Los Angeles. Um, what about eight years ago? Um, we were living in the same apartment building we got in when the getting was good. So it was, um, we were kind of the cool kids in downtown Los Angeles.

Really popular. So what would you say? A younger, wealthier crowd moved in and they took over the rooftop pool and barbecue area.

**Anna Finch:** It's a group of about eight of us, just kind of said enough was enough. And we all came together. Nobody really quite knew each other, but we knew that we wanted to reclaim our turf.

So we started something called the Sunday Supper Club out of at least a mutual love for food and socializing. And so that was where Brien and I kind of met for the first time living in that building at the Sunday Supper Club.

**Brien Teasley:** I was smooth because the first words I said to her was what does a white girl know about Chaka Khan?

**Claire Clotney:** What was your response? I need to know, Anna.

**Anna Finch:** More than you might expect. Yeah. I happened to be running the soundtrack at the time and you hadn't really spoken to me for the first two Sunday Supper Clubs and then that's what you choose as your opening up.

**Brien Teasley:** I was already smitten with her.

**Claire Clotney:** Well, you'll cool kids. That's how I would describe you both and LA is a place where cool kids kind of hang out. Right? But you both come from very different backgrounds, Louisiana, Bath, LA, all three places are so different.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah, know, Bath is not a diverse place. I think Brien has opened the Wikipedia page several times to prove the demographics of, but yeah, and you know, he likes to make the joke that when he comes and visits, he doubles Bath's black population.

So, you know, I moved to America from China and I'd been living in China for about four years. Where again, there definitely isn't a big black demographic there. And then I went to university in Edinburgh back in 2004 to 2009. And the reason I'm seeing the years is because we were just back there about a month ago, and I definitely could feel that it had changed.

It was more diverse from when I was at university, but yeah, I really haven't grown up with a large diverse population around me until I got to America.

**Claire Clotney:** And what about yourself? Brien?

**Brien Teasley:** In St. Louis, I lived in a town right outside called Webster. Specifically in an area called North Webster, which was a historically black community, a middle-class working class, completely surrounded by an upper middle-class white neighborhood.

So my, where I grew up in. You know, at one time, I think it was the first, all black school in the area back in the late 18 hundreds. So it had a lot of history to it, but where I went to school was very racially diverse, but it was St. Louis in the 80. So when I say diverse, it was black and white, you know, I was always able to mix with a lot of different people.

And then from there, you know, I went to school and undergrad in St. Louis and then grad school in Boulder, Colorado where the diversity definitely went way down. And then as I kind of, after grad school just kind of moved around and, you know, try to find diversity from San Francisco, but then I moved to wine country and then I moved to Oakland.

So there's been some pretty interesting places. So usually I've been around a lot of diversity.

**Claire Clotney:** Sure. Whenever we're talking about, um, love and relationships and people coming together, everyone has these, you know, I wouldn't say rose tinted glasses, but everyone wants to talk about, you know, let's not talk about the differences.

Let's talk about what we share in common, but for the sake of this podcast, I really want to know what were the striking cultural differences straight away for you both?

**Anna Finch:** For me. And, you know, I think this is, this is me being white. This is me being very white. That race and the conversation of race was a, not just even a day to day conversation, it was multiple times a day.

Thinking about race. What are the implications? Where are we going? Who are we talking to? I think. An issue. And, you know, I don't know whether you want me to refer to some of the podcasts that you've done before. We've heard some recurring themes where it's the Brits coming over to America saying, you know, I was always aware that I was black, but it had never.

Thrown in my face in that I had to consider it either on a negative thing or just how big of a deal it is to some people. So, yes, I'm white. And I have that privilege of not having to think about it every day, but I come from it also from the British perspective of arriving in America, being in this relationship and looking at this person and.

Why are you talking about this so much on a topic to me would feel completely irrelevant of race somehow that topic still

**Brien Teasley:** comes in. Yeah. And I think I was surprised about the complete lack of talking about race and it wasn't that it was ignored because if it's brought up, it's definitely will be talked about usually in a very intelligent way, but it's usually in theory, but it just.

I think that I think most, you know, when I'm in back in Britain or even just with you and I, and I didn't bring it up, if it wasn't explicitly about race, I don't think he would bring it up either. So I think that's the biggest cultural difference for me. I think the other one that I noticed is there's a certain humor that Brits have that.

Um, I think it's a little dry. It might be a little sarcastic, it can be biting. And so I'm like, do you like. Yeah, we're all very effusive. And we give a lot of compliments and the compliments that I tend to get I'm like, does that mean, or is it not? I don't, I don't know. Sometimes

**Claire Clotey:** I definitely think that is a British.

Humor thing across the board, because I remember having to explain jokes to my husband and it kind of killed the joke, you know, you see banned, so we've got some expensive jokes. He's kind of pulled me up on some things and he's like, well, why would you want to mock this really good or precious thing?

Like, you know, Put in the situation down, I'm like, oh actually, yeah. Why do we do that? But I think that's part of us, Brits always kind of minimizing who we are. And I can only say that as a black woman, I think we definitely minimize who we are, but I don't know whether that's a generic, British thing. I think.

**Anna Finch:** Absolutely. It is. It's self-deprecating humor and being able to smile in the adversity of things. And I think over time, it's just become, not just plugging through things, but saying, well, laugh about it. Why not? You know, it's, I find

**Brien Teasley:** it amazing that you're able to sometimes make your self depreciation self-deprecating humor about me, you know?

I love a

**Anna Finch:** good compliment. Well, I don't discriminate against how

**Brien Teasley:** about that? There we go. There we go. All right. Fair enough.  
Like

**Anna Finch:** that,

**Claire Clotney:** like that. Have you found the conversations between yourselves and others about race helpful? What's what's it like?

**Brien Teasley:** Um, I'm tired of having the same conversation about race.

I think, I feel like that's, what's been happening lately. You know, I don't, wouldn't say I'm over it, but I think it's. It diverse conversations these days, especially with all the black men getting shot, uh, police violence. It tends to be kind of the one thing. And I think, I don't know, during COVID, you know, their lack of, uh, access to vaccinations, it's a sentence to be kind of a one note.

And so I'm getting a bit, I'm going to say bored of it. Cause I don't want to sound like, I know this is not important. I just wish there was a little bit more diversity in the conversations as well as maybe. More solutions, you know, even if you're not able to affect change in a larger scale, it's just, we talk about it and talk about it and talk about it.

And then it's like, well, and where do we go from here? So that's where I am

**Anna Finch:** with it. Yeah. So, yeah. It's, I mean, it's exhausting. And I know when we've spoken to you before Claire, it's, it's talking about that general weight that is in your day-to-day life in America. And for me, I'm not going to say that that's just about race or issues that relate to Brian in that sense.

It's. When we talk about the American dream, I think after it, you know, I've been here for 11 years and so much of what your soul does, a bill of goods kind of suddenly appears to be very surface level. And then when you realize actually what's underneath that and actually what the experience is and what you're getting, it blows my mind that everybody's.

Preaches about their freedom over here and how it's the greatest country in the world. And they've, they've, they've been sold something that they truly believe

it. And I think coming from the UK, I look at the reality of it over here and think you've, you've all been taken for months.

**Brien Teasley:** Well, I think one of the things, one of the first things that we noticed is, you know, she was thinking about the American dream, but she's like, well, you're an American.

And I was like, well, I'm a black American, so there's a whole different experience that I've had throughout my life. So I don't maybe have. Rose tinted glasses that other people have, or that some Americans have. I, you know, you can kind of see what is it, the, the roaches in the walls, you know, would you rather, you know, let's see one Roach or pull the whole wall out and see all the roaches.

So that's kind of how I kind of looked at it. So I don't know if I shared the same even thought of America. Like when you were in the UK watching, uh, before you moved here, U S show. Uh, like TD show is based in the us. It's nothing like that. Obviously, you know, if you watched saved by the bell, I don't think anybody went to high school like that.

Like that show is

**Claire Clotney:** sure. I mean, I probably have a different view of the American dream being a black child of immigrants in the UK coming over to America. I mean, we saw all the movies, like the spike Lee movies. There was just so much media for us to see. It was like we were producing our own movies. It seems like the land of opportunities and I guess, whatever industry you're in America always had it bigger.

So I could see the appeal for any other person who was an American coming in. But I'm really interested in about what the American dream looks like for a black American. Well, you

**Brien Teasley:** know, I grew up pretty working class, single mom. I always just wanted to. I think when I was younger, it was just get out of St.

Louis. Um, it's a lovely city now, but it was just, I never felt like it was from me. So I never really thought much about the American dream. You know, I just wanted to travel, you know, I think when I was coming of age, I was kind of a

weird little hippy kid. And then I kind of became, I think, I think I called myself a poetic.

You know, I was all into Bob Kaufman and the beat poets and, you know, ended up going to the only Buddhist university in the United States, the Ropa university. So I don't know, I tended to just be, didn't really think about the American dream, you know, growing up, I played, you know, whereas a lot of my friends are basketball and football.

I played soccer. Gymnastics. And so I've always been comfortable being the only black guy on the team or in a room. I do have to say moving to Boulder was a really stark reminder, but I just noticed that it was most of the black people in Boulder were coming in for the football team at the university of Colorado.

So I started to notice that then. I think that's when I moved to the bay area after that, and kind of got that back. I mean, at one point I was living in a town of 1500 people up in the mountains of Colorado in there only three black people in the entire town. And so again, I think we were all kind of hippies.

We had a lot of. Experiences in terms of, you know, hiking and climbing and skiing and stuff like that. I kind of looked past that I was the only black person or I couldn't look past it. That was the only black person kind of just accept that we're all a bunch of weird hippies up in the mountain village side that wasn't, it's never been particularly hard for

**Claire Clotney:** me.

What do you think people's assumptions of you both as a couple, have been in the UK and the U S because you've visited both, haven't been back and forth.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah. Something that we definitely get. You know, when we moved here from downtown LA, we used to get a lot more problems from strangers. As we walked down the street being an interracial couple, which was surprising to me in California.

In comparison to new Orleans where you are. I can't say that we see a lot of interracial couples in new Orleans. It's still we'll occasionally get some looks, but I don't notice any looks



**Brien Teasley:** though is when, um, a lot of times. Look. So if somebody asks, well, where's your wife and I'll point to Anna and they'll be like, Hmm, like this is a black person.

And they're like, Hmm. Especially black women. Then they find out she's British. They're like, oh, that's different. I still don't understand

**Claire Clotley:** why. If she was a white American, they wouldn't be all right. But if she was a, what do they call that? Sally or is it Becky or whoever Becky is not allowed, but Anna from the UK is.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah. Yeah. And it's a complete 180 degree term. I mean, suddenly they're my best friend and they're talking about my hair. They love my hair. Most compliments. I get all my hair is from black women. I mean, Decided to broach the topic, because for me, I'm just relieved that it's changed from what I'm perceiving as a negative reaction to now everything's fine.

So I've, I've never decided to kind of open that box and kind of say, can I ask you, you know, what, what your impression of me was before you knew that I was British? What was that gut instinct that you had? Um, but you know, maybe, maybe one day I

**Claire Clotley:** will. It is interesting because I think since being here, it really feels black and white when you're watching the news is quite frightening.

**Brien Teasley:** Absolutely. I was going to say. It was a very different story though, with how people perceive us. I think

**Anna Finch:** we got some looks. A favorite story is one of the first times that I took him back to Bev and we're sitting at the Raven pub upstairs having our pie and a pint as we all want to do. And the tables are all packed in really close together.

And it's your Friday at two o'clock and there's just this big table of white guys that have come out for their late lunch to probably pop off work early. And I go up to the bar to get us another round and give Brian a kiss. And Brian just hears these men sat shoulder to shoulder with him. One guy just turns to his friend and.

What would you feel about if your daughter with was with it with a black fella?  
Whoa,

**Brien Teasley:** I can hear you.

**Anna Finch:** And you're just thinking, oh God, what is going to be the response to this? What's the implication. And there's a pause and the guy just turns to him and say, Well, where would she have met him?

Quickly followed up with he's a good bloke. I'd have no problem at all, but it was just the complete honest question of just like, well, what. How would that

**Brien Teasley:** have happened? And I think I went through about 10 different emotions in that like 30 seconds of that conversation. I was like, oh God, what do I have to do now?

Am I going to get into a British fight? The British pub too. Oh, good. Oh, that's nice to hear. Those are very interesting turn of events right

**Claire Clotney:** there. It's really weird because Bristol's up the road from barf and Bristol is really quite diverse. That said, though, if you're looking at Bristol, you're looking at areas like samples.

I love Bristol. So that's why I know this stuff. Yeah. Go just a little bit further out. He's very white on the outskirts and there's this like really small dip in the village of, yeah,

**Brien Teasley:** but we were just in Scotland and we had got into a little, I don't wanna say TIFF, but a little bit of a spat. And I was saying, look at the lack of diversity of Edinburgh, but I was in probably.

Richest part of town until like, she's like, let me, let's go for a walk. So when she took me to this area and as we're walking, every kid we saw was biracial and I was like, oh, okay. You know, maybe I jumped the gun a little bit on that. So I definitely noticed that it's more of areas like you saying, like in Bristol and in Edinburgh there areas.

Diversity within there or black areas, but yeah, that was very interesting.

**Claire Clotney:** Well, would the UK, the mixed race population is the fastest growing ethnic group and in the U S it's the Asian ethnic

**Brien Teasley:** group. Yeah, I think that's one of the things that I had to realize, you know, When I looked at the UK, it's a complete different kind of diversity than it is in the United States.

Uh, you know, just because they were biracial does not mean that they were black and white, it was black and or white, Indian, it was Asian and Indian, and it was all different kinds of diversity.

**Anna Finch:** If you were talking to said that in his daughter's classroom, There were something like 42 different nationalities.

Yeah.

**Brien Teasley:** And this is just a regular public school. Whereas, you know, most public schools in America, you are definitely the it's the product of the neighborhood. So, you know, without busing or anything like that, the schools look exactly like the people that live around the school. So I just thought that was bad.

**Claire Clotney:** Has that affected your thoughts about where you choose to live in the future? I mean, why have you stayed in the U S together or why haven't you gone to bath or. You know, somewhere else, Santa you're, you're good with travel to China and stuff, but why have you stayed?

**Anna Finch:** I think, um, yeah, going back to bath after having lived in Beijing, Los Angeles office.

Lovely. But I still need a bit more kind of . And that that's

**Brien Teasley:** the thing for the most part, I've been more team to get to the UK than she has. Yeah. I've been kind of beating that door for you. Don't do it for a couple of years now.

**Claire Clotney:** Why do you want to go to the UK

**Brien Teasley:** TBA? Well, you know, I've been here, you know, most of my life, uh, you know, I traveled a lot, you know, it's.

Nope. Worked from the same bar at one point in Beijing, for me outside of new Orleans, I can imagine where we go next. You know, after this, when we go to Cleveland in America, and for me, maybe the never the, not worried about getting shot, not worried about, um, you know, the crime rates, just some of the things that have made.

It doesn't do so well or does very well. Cause we're very good at shooting people. You know, we're thinking of having kids and sometimes the education system looks not so great unless you want to take them to a very expensive private school. So there's many different reasons why I think, and I've been wanting to move and also just to see something different.

I've never particularly been the foreigner in any place where she has. Yeah, I think that's. And just to kind of the opportunity, whereas, um, you know, America is, you know, we were able to start our own business. Uh, here. I kind of want to see if we can do something similar across the

**Claire Clotney:** pond. Any concerns about what your family or friends would say, if you left the U S.

To the small island, which is the UK and nothing against small islands. But what do you think?

**Brien Teasley:** I think at this point, no one would be surprised cause I probably talk their ear off about it. I think they would be more surprised that we actually did it. You know, when we moved from LA to new Orleans, I think people thought we were.

But we wrapped that we wrapped up LA in three months and we're gone. And then all of our friends were like, what, what just happened? But I think no one would be surprised for me. I think they'd be more surprised on your end because kind of, she said like the journey would feel almost over in some places, you know, having left 14 years ago.

And so when I'm more teens on it, especially after the hurricane Ida, that definitely changed my mind or it got me to one accelerated.

**Claire Clotney:** I know you've, you've paused on it. You're like your thoughts. You seem like I'm looking at you, people can't see, but I can see you and you just think I'm not convinced.

You're not convinced about move to the UK.

**Anna Finch:** Well, I mean it's, I think my concern is there's something about London that I've never been drawn to. It's like, I've always been kind of in second cities, you know, it wasn't Hong Kong, it was Beijing. It wasn't, you know, New York was early, but you know, New Orleans is kind of got this bigger reputation than what it actually is.

And so London to me, I feel like I've missed my time in London. You know, when all of my friends graduated from university that's when they went to London and they were okay. Living in a very small apartment and spending a lot of money. And I'm at the age where I'm kind of, I would like to feel comfortable in my home.

So it's where would it be? And having left the UK at what was it about 21 years old and really only having spent time in Bath and Ed. I really don't know much about the UK. Brian knows London. I've been to Bristol a few times. So when he's saying, well, where would you want to move? I don't know. I don't know anything about these cities.

I think it's, it's also, it's it's not so much America. That's keeping me back. I think that's where I went into pause mode because I'm trying to unravel this feeling. I'm right with Brian. That honestly I'm, I've had my time in America. I see a lot of problems here that I don't see getting better any time soon, but it's the magic of New Orleans that keeps me here.

New Orleans is like this little bubble inside of America. You know, we're in this big red state where there's blue in a red state. In American unions, you just take it down bit by bit to this little microcosm that we live in that is so special and so interesting. And so much of a mix of black and white that it's

**Brien Teasley:** Creole and.

**Anna Finch:** I just wonder sometimes could I be satisfied back in a British city or town where there's not a second line, suddenly appearing down the street or somebody doing donuts in their car, much as it annoys me, but it's great

**Brien Teasley:** fun. You know, we're sitting and talking about, and I start saying, well, what, where would we live in the UK?

We'll be outside at a bar at a bunch of people on a dirt bikes. We'll come riding by doing wheelies. Your second line will come past and we're like, ah, how do I give this part up? So, yeah, I'm not sure.

**Claire Clotney:** We've been successful here. Both of you as an interracial couple, you have honest and open and really useful conversations about race.

That they're only just starting in the UK terms like white allies. Really quite new. Um, and whilst there are lots of white allies in the UK, the conversation is still very, very uncomfortable. So how can issues be addressed if no, one's talking about them.

**Brien Teasley:** When I started seeing black lives rally in the UK, you know, that blew me away.

I, I. I don't know, I was loved going to the UK and meeting a black person because obviously they don't know I'm American until I opened my miles. And I'm always just shocked when I see a black person with a British accent, even now it's just like, come on, man. You can talk to me. It's always shocking. But yeah, I was really, it was interesting to see that happening in the UK.

It definitely, you know, talking with your parents, they, they didn't really much mention it. They tend to be more Brexit. You know, they talk about the things that tend to affect them. You know, rather than the black lives matter.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah, I think again, that's, that's a result of being in bath. They're their own little bubble, kind of like new Orleans of granted.

There is the conversation that their son in law is black, but we have also chosen to live on the other side of the world. So it's hardly like that impacts them very much day to day. I think my, my dad's pretty open. There's a definite difference. So my dad asks more questions and my mum, I guess sometimes needs to be a bit more.

Have things explained to her she'll come in with the preconceived notion. You're right on that note of the conversations are only just starting in the UK. I'll hear things come out of certain friends or family members mouths back in the UK that I'll just kind of go, oh gosh, there is a lot of conversation to be had here and you're so.

Unaware of what you just said and the layers that we need to peel back for you to get to a point of understanding why you can't keep saying that and why you're just absolutely wrong. Even if you're sitting there thinking that you're not saying anything

**Brien Teasley:** wrong. Well it's, um, it seems like I've also become, become the, um, the black friend to a lot of British people because they might not have had one or they surrounded themselves with just people they grew up with.

And so a lot of questions are being asked, but it seems like they're starting right at ground zero, you know? So it is education. So it's been. Interesting to be starting so new and having people that honestly are grown adults and have no idea that this is how the world actually works or is, or even knew about the police brutality or any of the issues going on.

So this has been very interesting being. Uh, sounding board, it gets a little annoying when, you know, they're trying to test their wokeness to see on me. Cause I'm the only one that they know it's at least starting somewhere.

**Claire Clotney:** It's a bit frustrating for me because I have had conversations, um, you know, I've overheard and read blogs online where there's this assumption that racism doesn't exist in the UK.

At the same scale or level that it does in the us. And whilst gun's always part of that conversation, I think if you take out guns and you just think of, um, interpersonal skills, um, you know, just community interaction, people will realize that, whoa, there are so many things that go on. That are racially motivated in the UK.

We just don't talk about them. Yeah. You

**Brien Teasley:** know, I've been, you know, when I think about moving there, you read statistics like where there's population is 10% black would make up something like 80% of police stops and things like that. So it's still, there's, you know, vast racial disparities, but like you said, I think America does every.

Much much larger scale and louder and louder. Yes, yes, yes. Yes. So when there's an injustice, we speak up, you know, that might've been because we're all children of the children of the civil rights movement, black power movement

that we have the right to protest and we have the right to be angry. But I guess I haven't seen that from the UK, but I honestly don't know that part.

Just.

**Claire Clotney:** Whilst you're sitting down and considering what life could be like if you lived in the UK, really, honestly. Do you think that you will be treated better in general as a black man in the UK than you would be in the U S.

**Brien Teasley:** I don't think it would be better. I think it would probably be different.

There's a lot of, you know, everybody talks about microaggressions in the U S there tends to be a lot more macro aggressions. So at least you generally know where you stand with somebody, especially in the south, they'll let you know, you know, just how they feel about you or, you know, especially I get, oh, you speak very.

Yeah, it's very right

**Anna Finch:** in your face all the time. And I'm just thinking of that woman that we met. She was the racism bingo cards, and it always, it almost became funny at the moment because we had. Oh, well, you speak incredibly well for a black man. Then she said, oh, can I ask you about your dreadlocks?

Because my daughter has dreadlocks and people have told her that she is culturally appropriating, but then she goes on to say, but I asked all my little black friends about it and got their opinion. I mean, I'm just watching her, just my George, that pain, her confidence that none of this

**Brien Teasley:** sounded wrong to.

And so I don't think I'd probably get that in the UK. I think it would be more of the, the microaggressions, the, this, the kind of the little everyday things that kind of just start to needle at you a little bit. And so it's not like it's not those things that you come home just angry about because something happened to you or something was said to you, it's the things that you just, you almost don't even notice.



And it just like this, the sideways glances, the maybe not expecting you to be able to afford something in a store, things like that.

**Anna Finch:** So there's that strange thing. Almost on a weekly basis, even though it's the same supermarket we've been going into for this point, about six years down in this neighborhood, we'll put our stuff down for lunch and it will always be the question.

Is this together? And we have to see parents as it was yesterday, as it was the day before.

**Brien Teasley:** Um, you know, I, I'm not, definitely not expecting like a wholesale change in my life or anything like that. I just kind of want the adventure as well of moving and trying something new. It's not like, you know, when the days of.

Josephine baker and James Baldwin, where it was horrible for them to be, you know, a gay black man in America. So moving into France, wasn't, that's a wholesale change right there. I'm not expecting that level of, uh, of difference in, of, of my eyes to be opened in, you know, to be treated much better. I just think it's going to.

A quieter level of racism than I may be used to

**Claire Clotney:** here. Uh, I'll tell you what, and this is from my experience, what racism does it chips away at your self-confidence and it makes you conform, you know, we talk about code switching all the time. It makes you conform. So and code switch. So frequently that at times, I felt that I've had to be around black people to remember who I am, because every day I leave the house, my engagement, my interaction is right.

Okay. Speak like a Westland dinner, brush your hair back a certain way, carry yourself a certain way. It chips away at your sense of self identity. And I'd much prefer sometimes to know exactly where I stand.

**Brien Teasley:** That's the other thing, you know, when you get it. Blatantly you grow a thick skin. And I don't think you have, like, for me, didn't have a much of a need to conform.

It was more to confront everything head on because so blatant that if you just sat there and did nothing that would eat at me all day, it hardens you a bit, but it

makes you almost for me, at least in my experience to not want to conform, to not buy into that. But I definitely can't imagine the way that a little one would just keep chipping away at you.

When I was younger, I definitely used to code switch. I don't any more. I don't even know if I could, if I tried, this is just how I speak. I have to say Dean down here is very interested in speaking the way I do, because I have basically no accent, but actually I tend to get more microaggressions, uh, with the, with some members in black community than I deal with people in the white community.

So it's more, are you black? And. To be, you know, down here. So it's kind of a little bit of boats and the end of it. I'm still going to get called the N word as

**Claire Clotney:** well. Yeah. Yeah. I, I definitely feel you on that. I think that contributed to the reason that I went natural and have dreadlocks myself is I know who I am as a black woman, but I didn't feel that the outside.

You know, not that I did my hair for the outside world to know who I am, but it was an expression of who I was. So now there's no question about how I sound, where I live, what I wear, you know, what I choose to cook. They know what they're dealing with as soon as they see me. And that for me is

**Brien Teasley:** comforting.

I think it's always an interesting thing. We do a call with a client before they've ever met. And they might not know what we look like. They might've gotten through word of mouth. And then when you meet them, I like being able to have a head full of dreads and, you know, while still wearing a nice scarf, you know?

So I like the juxtaposition of that. It's a combination of things. Now, when people start to talk to me, they realize that I'm probably a little more righteous about my blackness than they might've first realized they think they know who I am because of how I look. And then as soon as you start talking to me about it, you know,

**Claire Clotney:** And you touched on something earlier on that, you know, really is playing on my mind.

One thing for me as a woman in America, dating an African-American man is that I am definitely more worried and fearful for his safety than I would have

been in the UK that said in the UK, I was at, uh, you know, I lived in London, so it was very. And there's so many reasons why I wasn't as afraid. I think you get past a certain age bracket in the UK as a Batman where you think, oh, bad things don't happen in the same way.

The threat of violence significantly goes down. That kind of thing. But as a, a wife or a partner to a black man, what things do you think you'll have to worry about? Or do you think that you'll be considering living in the UK whilst with.

**Anna Finch:** Um, that's interesting because I think you've probably can tell from you speaking to Brian a few times, you're allowed boisterous, not afraid to speak your mind just in the same way that you said rather than conform you confront.

And that's always been kind of something that I do worry about. And in the U S in the U S. Um, but I think

**Brien Teasley:** for people like me

in

**Anna Finch:** the U S probably more so in the UK, that would be my concern of just this unusually dressed little man walking around, getting kind of confrontational with, with maybe some Scottish Chavez who have some, have a bit of Buckfast in them and have a few precise words to say again, maybe also, because.

The conversation hasn't gone far enough in the UK and not expecting the raft. The reaction there could be very different, bringing the American to the UK. That's

**Brien Teasley:** I think it's hard enough to bring the American to the UK, but especially on a sensitive subject. Cause that's where I think. Which is

**Anna Finch:** then. Yeah, it's a very uncomfortable thing to say, because at the same time, I don't want to be sitting here saying, keep your mouth closed and conform, but do take care of yourself and don't push it so far that I'm worried that something really bad physically is going to happen to you.

But I don't know where that line should be drawn and. That's a tough one.

**Claire Clotley:** We had a conversation before and you know, you haven't mentioned it now, but I, it just sat with me. Brian, you mentioned that by leaving the U S in the, you know, the way things are, you didn't want people to feel like he were escaping or, you know, leaving people behind with the struggle.

**Brien Teasley:** Yeah, I think it was along the lines of it's that balance. Or am I running away from something or am I running to something? And, you know, I think as things have gone on, uh, time has gone on I'm. I just need to define what, why. To prove myself and then what I'm looking for and running too. I haven't quite landed on the elevator pitch version of that yet.

You know, I'm not too worried about running away. And like I said, for me personally, it was, um, and it's the beauty of new Orleans, but it's also the problem with it after Ida, when we were out of power for seven days. And we were some of the lucky people that got it back fairly quickly watching the entire infrastructure of the city just completely.

Just disappear. I, it kind of took the wind out of my sails on the city and that on the back of the pandemic. And so having, you know, a year and a half of no Marty Ross, no second lines, no live music, new Orleans art, just look like a really corrupt and really terrible. Without those things that made it new Orleans, they're making wallets now, as we're coming back, obviously that first week after the storm was like, pack up, we're moving, let's go stay with your parents.

Let's do anything. But as you know, services have come back, you know, it's starting to feel like new Orleans again. So I think that feeling that I had right after the hurricane a society. And so now, as opposed to running away from a crappy infrastructure, it's like, okay, let's run towards something. Let's, let's find an opportunity in the UK that really draws us there.

Whether it's moving our business over there, um, make finding a new business that's maybe more UK specific, had a little bit more time, a little bit more perspective to try to figure out what it is that we want.

**Claire Clotley:** What do you think he's running away from Ana, do you think he's he thinks he's run into

**Brien Teasley:** I'm going away from the heat.

Really? Yeah.

**Claire Clotney:** Yeah. You're on your own there I'm I'm mate, this melanin is made for the sun. I've said it before. I'll say it again.

**Brien Teasley:** You have that desert heat. Yeah, we have that Caribbean style heat. Yeah, they call it the Northern Caribbean. This is tropical

it's silly today. And my chili, I mean, it's about 58 degrees, but when that, when the temperature hits a hundred degrees with a heat index of one, 10 and 98%. No, no I'm done with it. And here's the thing I can always come back and visit new Orleans. And the,

**Anna Finch:** I mean, I guess all I'd say is, you know, right now we're on a podcast that's specifically about race.

And I think it's interesting when the topic is brought up of, do you feel like you're running away or running towards you really talked about kind of the business and. You didn't really talk about the recess aspects and when that is such a big conversation. And when we talk almost daily about the toll that it has taken.

For you being a black man in America. I think there's a bit more for you to say.

**Brien Teasley:** Yeah, I mean, no, I mean, I can say that over the course of 44 years, it has definitely has worn me down in different ways. I think it's made me a little bit more jaded. Just the, you know, the macroaggressions, the, um, sometimes never feel like I'm doing enough for the community, trying to find time to do enough for the community.

Uh, not even knowing what. That'd be part of the community in some ways, like I didn't grow up here. So I'm even, uh, some of them are 400 to them and it looks like I'm kind of being like this guy can come in and save you. So there are some it's kind of expectations and realities at the same time that I think he started, you know, wearing me down because it's not that I can't take it.

I look at it. Do I have to take it. Is this the best? This is the best use of my life to do this. And so, yeah, I, I think I would say I'm tired, you know, it's stressful, but I also want to be able to take, take the opportunities. I have to be able to do things like that. And maybe, you know, by the way I live my life and the

decisions I make show, uh, somebody that it is possible for a black American to get by in the UK and maybe inspire somebody that's coming up behind me.

So that's kind of where I'm where my head goes with

**Anna Finch:** that, you know, I think we're incredibly fortunate to have the resources and connections that it's even an option, you know, that we can sit and have the conversation of, Ooh, would you like to stay here where certain things feel very tough or should we pack a suitcase and fly across the ocean to.

Go and check out this country and had it not been for Brexit. It could have been this country or this country. And, you know, that's still not a completely UN viable option. We're incredibly drawn to Portugal. You know, when, when we arrive over there, it's your closest jump off point from the states. And the diversity is amazing and not just in a black and white sense, but.

All over great food scene. Great music scene. That's part of when we go back to that conversation, I said, it's for me, it's not America anymore, but there's a special magic of new Orleans. I think. Young Anna in my head that grew up in Barre thinking, oh my God, I can't go back to a place that is so white.

That it's just a Sunday roast every Sunday. And you know, I don't know, just that's it. And then you're your same thing all the time. I think, you know, it's, it's interesting, even just having this conversation, your porch will have that appeal and it's like, yes, there's a magic of new Orleans, but it is still in America.

I just can't go back to what I grew up in. I

**Brien Teasley:** think for me too, it's, you know, when you're a new Orleans, I love this city. You go five minutes in any direction. You're in Louisiana and that's a whole different world. You know, we get on a flight three hours later, we're we get all the way to Texas, you know, and I'm looking forward to, and what I also want to be able to do is travel within Europe.

We just did a two and a half, three hour flights in Lisbon to Edinburgh. And then on a weekend, you know, we could go to. France. And so it's more diversifying my life as opposed to, you know, America I've been to every state except for Hawaii. And so it's like, I I'm ready to see something new. I can be a couple of people's black friends.

**Claire Clotney:** What can the UK and the us learn from you both as an interracial?

**Brien Teasley:** That's a good question. I think for me being in a. Relationship does not affect your blackness in any way, shape or form. It's not a preference for one race, you know, over another, it's a preference for this one person over the other,

**Anna Finch:** right.

It's yeah, don't, don't fetishize it. Just understand that I met a guy on a rooftop and had a really good time with them and we both. Cooking outside and had similar tastes in music.

**Brien Teasley:** It seen as a defining that should be the defining part of Uber relationship is, and it's not, I mean, it's definitely a conversation.

I'm sure she's learned a lot from me. And I've learned a lot from her with being from the UK, then not talking about it, but I think that's the main thing that it's not to fetishize

**Anna Finch:** it.

**Claire Clotney:** So, you know, I'm just absorbing. And I think others will just absorb that. Um, because you have had to, because you're in a relationship because you live together because you work together, you've had to have those difficult conversations.

**Brien Teasley:** Often, I think the one thing is, and this is where, you know, maybe it gets the most contentious is when, if I say something's racist or she says something to not, and that's where our I'm like, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa,

**Claire Clotney:** Ooh. I would love to know the fine line between the two. Is it Anna, the British person that's not seeing that as racist or is it under the white woman that's not seen as, as racist?

Is it, you know, Brien, the African-American man that seen as racist ?

**Anna Finch:** You know, I think it's a mixture of all of those things. It's you probably having lost your faith that something could have been said, truly not in the way that you're sitting here, pouncing ready to confront and me being more

British and reserved and maybe understanding that white people have a lot to learn.

And so whilst it could definitely be perceived as being racist. I genuinely don't think it was the intent.

**Brien Teasley:** But, you know, it's usually, I think you want a more keep the peace.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah, I do. But that is a separate issue.

**Brien Teasley:** You know, I've definitely had people, you know, get asked like at a store, if I need help, we'll be in the same store.

Maybe in different sections get asked 4, 5, 6 times if I need help. And she won't get asked at all, or maybe just once and I get the, you know, the folding and I'm like, that's racist, you know? And she's like, she's like, no, I don't think that is. I think they're just, you just happen to be around that. And I'm like, yeah, I won't say I'm on the lookout for racism, you know, I'm not like that was racist.

That's racist. It's more of that. I think growing up, but growing up, um, black you tend to start, your eyes are more open to it. So you're, you're always on the lookout for it. Uh, so I think sometimes in she, she won't even, she won't see it. And if I say something happens, she'll say, I don't think that was racist.

I'm like, whoa, I've been doing this for 44 years. I think I know racism when I see it. And so I think that's the fight. I think another example is when somebody will go out of their way to say, oh my friend, like who, we will never meet my friend, Jared, he's black. It's like, it's not racist, but it's like, why did I have to know that your friend Jared is black, you know, from other people.

And so it's more like it's those little things. And so it's never been anything huge like I got called the N word. And she said, I don't think they meant it like that. It's never been, it's just on kind of the day to day stuff, but yeah, we kind of took a couple of pretty big fights over that.

**Anna Finch:** I think it's quite interesting as well, to your point about the fact that not only are we are in a relationship together, but obviously live together, but work together.



And essentially we spend almost 24 hours a day together and so, that must be,

**Claire Clotney:** I mean, I dunno how you do it. I don't think I could spend that long with anyone

**Brien Teasley:** For about seven years. Right?

**Claire Clotney:** Amazing.

**Anna Finch:** So every interaction that you go through, I pretty much go through as well. And so we're experiencing the exact same interactions, very potentially in very different ways throughout our day.

**Brien Teasley:** Oh yeah. I remember we have one client that just could not put together that you and I were married. And I think I got a little bit irritated with you. Cause I was like, cause I would say, oh, that's my wife. And I just don't think you've ever specifically said that's my husband. I remember being like, Yeah, the clients were white and I was like, is this one of these things that she's trying? I didn't know what her intention was, but we didn't end up taken that client.

**Anna Finch:** It, it sounds almost exactly like an example of something that you thought might have been racist that I just thought is because your last name is Teasley and mine is Finch and we have a nine year age gap.

**Brien Teasley:** Fair enough

**Claire Clotney:** You know, I feel so fortunate to have had this conversation with you. And also the others can hear the kind of conversations that you have and where there's an assumption of ease or ignorance in interracial relationships. I think the British element, the American element, the white element, the black element, and just that day to day acknowledgement, I think it's going to be very helpful to other listeners.

So I appreciate you both.

**Brien Teasley:** Thank you. Appreciate coming on.

**Anna Finch:** Yeah, really?

It's been great.

**Brien Teasley:** Now we get to go have a fight about this.

Now we're going to have a glass of wine and congratulate ourselves on how great we were.

Yeah.

**Claire Clotley:** You, to be honest, really great, and very insightful. How can people connect with you if they just want to pick up the conversation or of course, purchase something, become a client of yours and product design. And you know, you have lots to offer.

**Anna Finch:** We, we have very minimal social media access, unfortunately, but our company is Real DFM. So were at [anna@realdfm.com](mailto:anna@realdfm.com) and [brien@realdfm.com](mailto:brien@realdfm.com)

**Claire Clotley:** Anna Finch, and Brien Teasley are honest and open about how tough conversations about race and their relationship can be and how at times they both feel their shared experiences very differently.

Their deep consideration of each other's identity and reflection on experiences as an interracial couple in the UK and US are both serious and funny, deep and lighthearted, romantic and pragmatic and black and white

To share your experiences of being black in the UK versus USA, email us directly at [americandreamerspodcast@gmail.com](mailto:americandreamerspodcast@gmail.com) and please rate and review American Dreamers on Apple Podcasts. It's the best way for people to find this podcast. Special thanks to Aurra Studios, our production team, and AP Brianna Jovahn and editor, David Devereux. Stay in touch with me on the socials at Claire Clotley.